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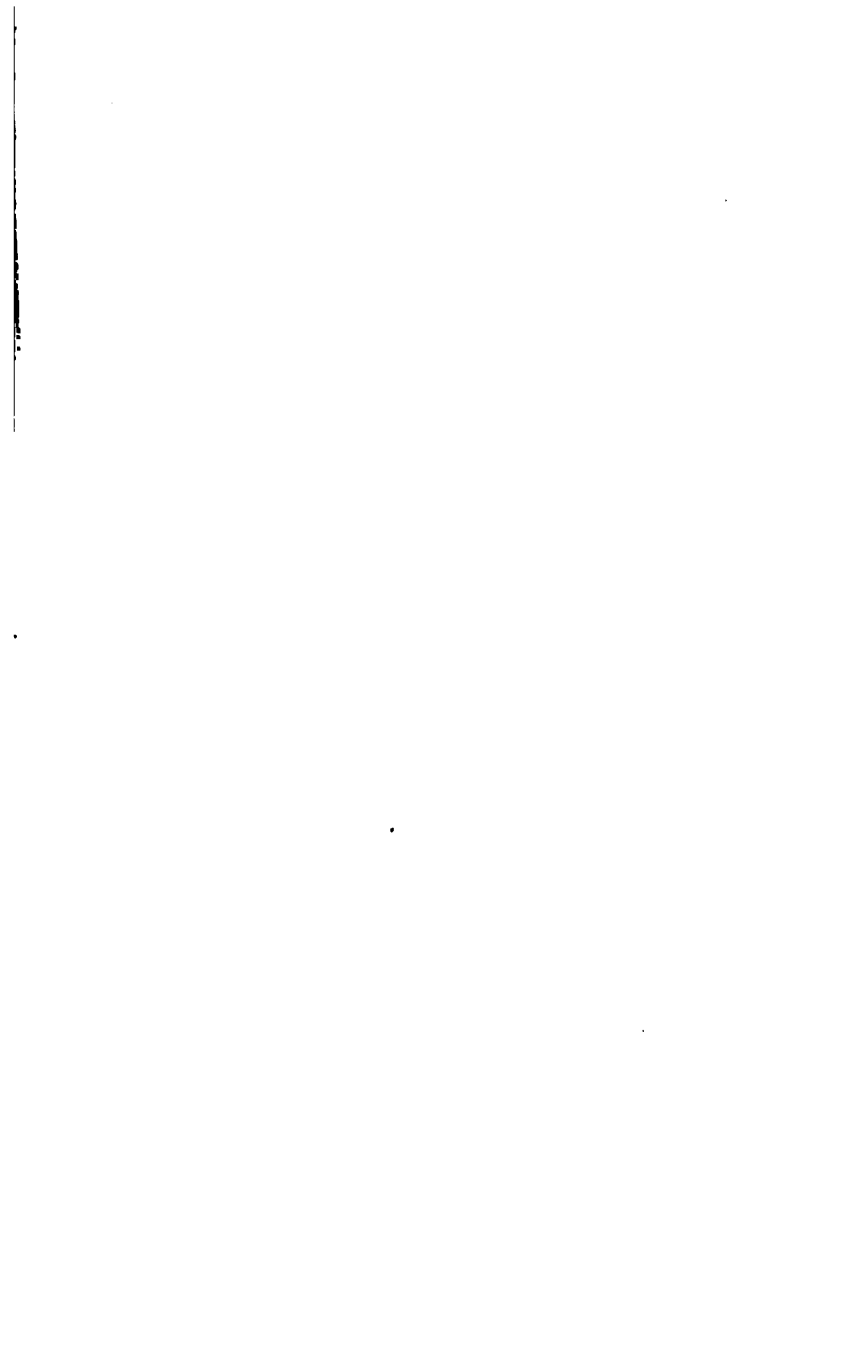
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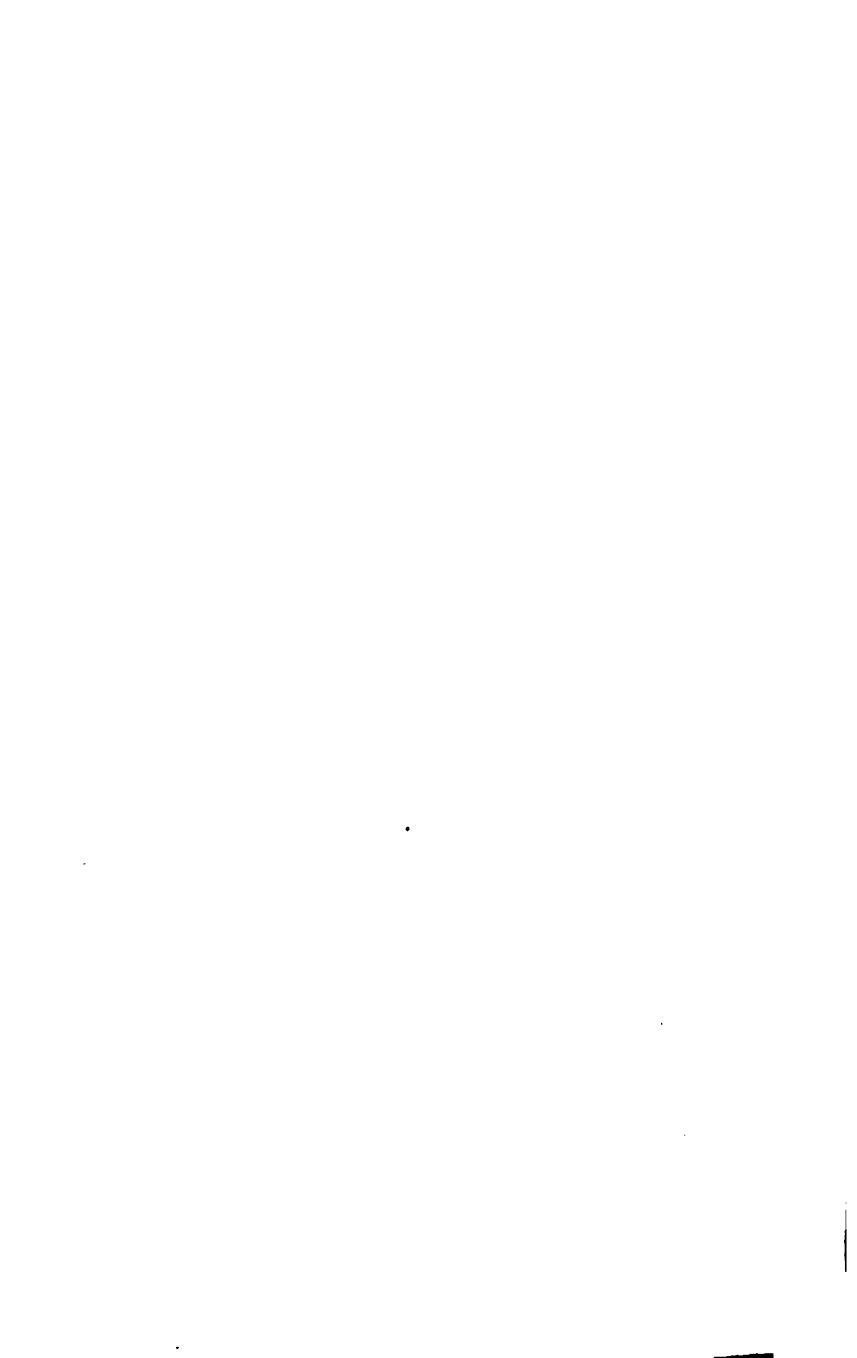


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BEATRICE CENCI:

1217

A

TALE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

Translated from the Italian of

F D. GUERRAZZI.

BY

MRS. WATTS SHERMAN.

IN FOUR BOOKS.

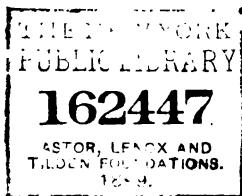
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BEATRICE CENCI.

Book Third.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SCARLET MANTLE.

" It is no time
For trifling or dissembling. I have said
His story's true; and he too must be silent. . . .
You stand high with the state; what passes here
Will not excite her to great curiosity:
Keep your own secret, keep a steady eye,
Stir not and speak not; leave the rest to me:
We must have no third babblers thrust between us."

BYRON. "WERNER."

"THE game is lost; let me shuffle the cards once more."

"But, Don Olimpio," observed the gambler, with a voice between sweetness and bitterness, "remember, we began to play a little before the evening *ave Maria*, and now it is nigh on to the same hour of the morning; every minute seems to me a torture as horrid as the gridiron of St. Lawrence."

"When, a little while ago, thou didst open thy mouth, I lodged a ducat in it, and thou didst cease barking, thou ugly Cerberus. By heaven! I have again lost; give me the cards."

"I would rather have you go away than take your money; I would, on the word of an honorable gambler. . . . It is now seven o'clock, which is the limit allowed by the viceroy's edict; and if the sheriff, who has an old grudge against me, should surprise me after that hour, it would be as well for me to throw myself into a well, with a stone round my neck."

"Thou vile Judas Iscariot!" cried Olimpio, striking his fist so violently on the table that all the bottles and glasses were smashed to pieces; "thou art the evil eye to the cards. . . . I have lost again; I lose constantly."

The gamester then, according to custom, had lied; for he and the sheriff were close friends; fingers of the same hand, always ready to grasp. The sheriff could not boast a more punctual and faithful spy than the gambler, not only as to what transpired in his establishment, but in matters outside of it. The reward of this infamous co-partnership was the ability to transgress with impunity the laws against gambling: a vice in those days as well as now deemed highly reprehensible; yet then, as in our own day of boasted civilization, extensively practised in secret. Good laws are like damask tapestries, used only on holidays to cover soiled walls. The worst vices continue to exist under good laws, and society seems to get along very well with the old abuses, as a man chews with decayed teeth; nor is the correction of disorders that spring from the innate corruption of men a work to be accomplished by a stroke of the pen. Who thinks otherwise loses both labor and time; or he curses the unconquerable wickedness of man, and yields to despair, instead of correcting his own errors and beginning anew. But this sort of reasoning is not to our purpose, and we therefore resume our narrative.

"Devil take the luck! . . . All are gone. . . ."

"Courage, Don Olimpio; we must wait for better fortune: thou wilt make it all up to-morrow."

"By the holy apostles, Peter and Paul! It's a hard thing to say so; but fortune flatters me with falsehoods. . . ."

"He wins who perseveres: and to prove thy perseverance thou must return every day provided with powder and ball."

"Marzio whispers every day in my ear that my game is over and that his thousand sequins are nearly gone. . . ."

"One thousand and one thousand make two thousand. Dost not know, Don Olimpio," observed the gamester, "that with two thousand sequins one can buy a duchy? How hast thou gained all this money? Come, tell us how it was obtained."

The blow came so direct that Olimpio was taken by surprise. Eyeing the gambler steadily, yet suspiciously, he replied:

"It was my part of the prize money won in battle for the faith."

"What faith? . . . Begging thy pardon, it seems to me," said the gamester, "thou must have been more with the Turks than the Christians. And on what seas hast thou fought?"

"Oh! on many."

"But, what seas?"

Pushed by these urgent questions, Olimpio was on the point of sinking still deeper in the mire, when one of the players fortunately came to his aid, by demanding,

"Why didst thou not bring thy companion, Marzio, with thee?"

"Oh! Marzio associates with great folks; he is always

with gentlemen, and lives like a duke, as if he and I had not led the same life together in the woods of Luco."

"In the woods, then," said the gambler, with a malignant sneer; and fixing the point of his finger on the table; "in the woods, then, and not on the seas, thou didst make thy money."

"Whether in the woods, or on the sea, what matters it to thee, vile Judas? Ah! thou wouldst put me on trial?" replied Olimpio, angrily; and the gambler, not liking that colossal figure, checked himself, as the snail withdraws its horns when they are touched.

The evening following, Olimpio did not take his usual seat at the gaming table, but sat down at the lower end of the room, and leaned his head on his open hand, his face looking more ferocious than ever, from being half obscured by the tobacco smoke, which came in short, quick, restless puffs from his mouth.

"The galley of Acapulco is not arrived this evening?"

"Why hast not brought thy friend, Don Marzio?"

These two questions hit simultaneously, like two arrows, the same mark. Feeling the sting, Olimpio, after cursing both "his body and blood," angrily answered:

"Because, forsooth, he wears the red mantle he stole from Count Cenci, he thinks he's the count himself."

"Comfort thyself," said the gambler, placing before him a mug of wine.

Olimpio emptied it at a draught, and with a sigh replaced it on the table.

"Thou dost not like me," resumed the gambler; "and thou art wrong. To prove it, if thou wishest half a dozen ducats with which to regain thy losses, I will lend them to thee. . . ."

"Who has told thee I do not like thee? On the contrary, I like thee better than my bread. . . ."

"And that Marzio, whom thou respectest as thy superior, how ill he treats thee, and denies thee money! . . ."

"What, thinkest thou, he said to me when I told him I had no money? 'If thou art poor, hang thyself.'"

"Said he so?"

"He did! And that I should tell him where I was going; for if I went to the west, he would go eastward. . . ."

"Enough to make the very stones weep;" and the gambler, taking a sip of wine, offered the mug to Olimpio, who emptied it without stopping to breathe. The usual ingratitude of men: so long as they are in want, they promise thee the whole world; but their object being attained, they fly off, and leave thee in the lurch."

"Precisely so; but!"

"And now, what wilt thou do? If I can aid thee, use me, and thou wilt see whether I can go through fire or not for my friends. It is with men as with horses: I will prove thee in turn let us drink."

"Let us drink!" responded Olimpio; and having drunk and wiped his mouth with his hand, he continued:

"If I could be sure of placing a letter in the hands of the Cenci Family at Rome, I am certain they would aid me they would have to aid me"

"If, eh?" broke in the gambler, extending his ears like a frightened hare, whilst the muscles of his face dilated like grass after a heavy rain: his joy was that of a carnivorous animal who, hidden in the jungle, sees and hears the approach of his unsuspecting victim.

Nor was it true that Marzio had uttered such abusive and cruel language to Olimpio; quite the reverse: he had with great kindness told him that the thousand sequins

given him being spent, and it being very important they should both leave the kingdom, he could not consent to consume in gambling or in taverns the money in his possession, which was necessary for the journey : but Olimpio lied purposely, and feigned a wrong to put himself right : a very frequent occurrence with evil-disposed people ; and what seems still more extraordinary, it often happens they believe their own falsehood, and resent injuries they have never received. .

Marzio, however, on reflection, thought he had not acted wisely, and considered it dangerous to tamper with the brutal passions of Olimpio, now increased ten fold by long indulgence in the dissipations of a crowded city : he therefore resolved to see his comrade, and strive to persuade him to leave the kingdom ; a decision he at once put into execution. Knowing the gaming house to which Olimpio usually resorted in the evening, Marzio thither directed his steps, not doubting to find him there.

" They would have to aid thee ? " pursued the gambler, " and are the Counts Cenci thy bankers, Olimpio ? "

" The same, as if they were "

" I understand," resumed the gambler ; " perhaps thou hast sent to his long sleep some enemy of their house ? "

" They do not give rewards for such work : for even here, as there, there are those who spoil all trades "

" And then ? "

" It is worse worse than that the secret is here, within and that the lid may be kept well down, a silver screw is necessary. "

" Indeed ? And this secret thou canst confide to me "

" I know who murdered Count Cenci "

" Oh ! " cried all the players in a chorus, as they saw suddenly appear among them a man of courteous bearing,

wrapped up in a superb scarlet mantle trimmed with gold, "Welcome, Don Marzio; make thyself at home! . . ."

Marzio, not a little astonished to hear himself called by name, cast his eyes about, and fixed them on Olimpio, who, without turning his face, or noticing the new comer, fell into his previous sullen attitude.

"Don Marzio," said the gambler, "wilt thou put off thy cloak? By my faith, it well deserves thy care, for, in my opinion, it has the air of a donation *causa mortis* from some prince or marquis, or at least, some count."

Marzio again fixed his eyes on Olimpio, but he remained immovable; then, gracefully throwing off his cloak, he sat down to play. Experienced in the tricks and deceptions of gamblers, he kept constantly on his guard, and closely watched the cards and players; the contest thus became one between corsairs and pirates, with nothing to gain on either side. The gamesters, accustomed to easy victories over Olimpio, could hardly now return the sword to its scabbard. After playing a suitable time, suffering too, that evening more than usual, from a cough which had distressed him several months, Marzio, with the promise to frequent in future the establishment, resumed his mantle and departed; leaving Olimpio disappointed in his hope of a renewal of their relations, and of a proffer of about forty ducats for that evening. Marzio, disgusted with the rudeness of his old companion, resolved to spare himself the mortification of seeking a reconciliation, and determined to return home, pack his trunk and leave Naples the next morning at daylight.

Olimpio, so long as he entertained a hope of being reconciled with Marzio, was stern and forbidding; but now, seeing himself neglected, he became sullen and dejected; and, hastily leaving the room, set out to overtake Marzio. Nor did the head of the gaming house remain, but stealth-

ily followed them, watching and conforming to their movements; as a crow, with wings clipped, hops now here, now there, then stops and turns its head suspiciously, then hops again.

Marzio, hearing persons behind him walking rapidly, grasped his dagger, and stopping suddenly, demanded with a loud voice :

“ Who goes there ? ”

“ It is I, Marzio ; be not afraid ; I have not rejoined thee for any evil purpose ! ”

“ Whether evil or good matters little to me. Well ; what do you want with me ? ”

“ Be not angry ; let us go on, if you like, and talk at our leisure.”

They pursued their way. The gambler, also, skipping along, drew nigh.

“ Does it seem to you,” began Olimpio, “ an act of friendship to leave me without even a penny to give a beggar ? You have saved me from starvation to make me die of thirst.”

“ I have told you a thousand times, Olimpio, that whenever you choose to come to my house you will find plenty to eat and drink, but I cannot consent that you should squander the little money I have in wine, play, and other vices. You have already received your share, and I have settled all accounts with you ; besides this, I have shown that you owe me more than two hundred ducats ; you cannot deny it. What claim then have you upon my purse ? ”

“ You have taught me that with brigands and soldiers, and even noblemen, the want of right is no good reason why they should abstain from seizing the property of others.”

“ That is true ; but I spoke of right and not of strength ;

and as for strength, I have as much as you. Now, strength being equal, one must fold his hands and use his tongue."

"May not the tongue inflict deeper wounds than the hands? Where is the strength of the asp and viper? Man sometimes resembles the asp."

"Say always, not sometimes . . . I know it, for I have proved it."

"Especially in such places as Naples, where a criminal judge is empowered to discover crimes by granting rewards to accomplices, and commuting their punishment when they betray their associates . . ."

"Of this sort of judges there are plenty in the world; but, without the help of dolphins to drive the small fish into the net, few only would be caught."

"And despair, Marzio, as you well know, often makes men worse than dolphins; it makes them sea-dogs."

"I comprehend," thought Marzio to himself, and then blandly continued: "Olimpio, Olimpio! certain words that escaped the gambler make me fear you have committed a very serious indiscretion; it will ruin us both . . ."

"Really! Are we children . . ."

"Do not dissemble, Olimpio; for it may be the secret is neither mine nor your's any more, and it always devolves on me to correct your blunders; remember, life is at stake."

Olimpio made upon his two feet a brief examination of his conscience, and perceived too clearly that Marzio was right, but, being haunted himself by ghostly fear, could only reply in broken accents.

"Now that I remember distinctly . . . in fact . . . my dear Marzio . . . you must help me to remedy the matter . . . how could I help it? I was angry! In short . .

there slipped . . . from my mouth . . . something . . . which excited . . . the suspicion . . . the belief . . . that we were concerned in the murder of Count Cenci."

"Are you in earnest? Then we are lost . . ."

"Yes . . . I speak seriously . . . but those who heard me seemed to be honest people. Nevertheless, if I had not spoken . . . or, if there was any way to make them forget . . . or, at any rate, to make them silent . . ."

"How? Letters are closed with sealing wax, but lips must be stopped with a seal of lead . . ."

"That would be the shortest way . . . and yet one of steel might answer in this instance."

"That is my opinion," said Marzio, as he glanced at Olimpio, but the latter seemed to be on his guard; he listened attentively, but heard no sound in the street; his own hard breathing drowned the slight noise of the gambler's cautious tread. They had now arrived before a little chapel of the Madonna, where two lamps were burning. Olimpio, who was walking on the left side of his companion, was raising his right hand to take off his hat before the sacred image, when Marzio, taking advantage of the moment, plunged his stiletto to its very hilt in his body. Olimpio staggered, exclaiming:

"Marzio, what hast thou done? Holy Virgin, help me!"

Marzio renewed the attack, saying:

"Thou didst condemn thyself, Olimpio, in declaring that a gossiping tongue must be sealed with steel; and, please God, thine will be sealed for ever;" and, with these words, he stabbed him again and again. Believing him about to expire, Marzio wiped his dagger on Olimpio's coat, and turning to the Madonna, made the sign of the cross, and thus addressed the image:

"For this blood I must one day answer; but thou,

Mother of God, thou knowest whether I have shed it willingly : had I not done so, this man would have sent to perdition entire families, and a maiden, who resembles thee in sorrow and beauty, if not in glory."

And he pursued his way as if he had only recited his prayer before the Madonna, and not committed a murder in her presence. Melancholy mixture of devotion and ferocity, too common in those days ! Arrived at his lodging, he carefully packed his money and clothes in a port-manteau, left enough coin on the table to pay his bill, and departing at midnight, repaired to another inn to sleep, with the intention of embarking the following day on board the first vessel that might leave the harbor.

The gambler, who from a distance had witnessed the whole transaction, hopped and skipped along in his usual manner, till he reached Olimpio, but found him expiring.

"Don Olimpio ! Don Marzio has murdered thee, eh ? lest thou shouldst expose to justice that affair of the Cencis, eh ?"

And he looked with greedy curiosity upon the dying man. One might have fancied this repulsive, malignant countenance, as he stood leaning over Olimpio in the dim light of the lamp, the devil himself, watching to seize his soul so soon as he was dead, and bear it with him down to his burning regions.

Olimpio opened his death-stricken eyes, and seeing the face of the gambler, closed them again with a groan. The gambler was urgent.

"Vengeance ! vengeance ! If thou wouldst revenge thyself on Don Marzio, reveal all to me, for I am intimate with the sheriff ; and before thy soul arrives—" here he paused a moment, for the words which naturally came to his lips were, "in purgatory ;" and to say "in paradise," did not seem exactly suitable ; he, therefore, disembar-

passed himself by a "non-committal" course, as is usual with diplomatists—"arrives in the other world, thou wilt hear Marzio's soul trotting close behind thee."

Though Olimpio could see no more, he could still hear, and with the little sense yet left him could perceive the extent of his injury, while he felt remorse for his conduct and acknowledged the justice of Marzio's act. He moved his lips, and said something in a low tone. The gambler, bending forward on his knees, and supporting himself with both hands on the road, approached eagerly his ear to the mouth of the dying, to hear his last words; he heard them, but they were :

"Vile . . . Judas . . . Iscariot . . ."

And Olimpio expired. The gambler, foiled in his effort to extract the secret, ran off with such rapidity that he scarcely seemed to touch the earth, to a certain obscure alley in the most central part of the city; and here, without taking any caution, for the darkness of the night completely concealed him, he knocked in a peculiar manner at a small private door in the back part of a palace. The door opened and shut quietly and carefully.

On the following morning, at the break of day, Marzio was on the wharf. Finding no vessel on the point of sailing, save a small boat bound to Trapani, he contracted with her master for a passage on board; and was already stepping on deck when his scarlet mantle fell into the sea. The sailors made every effort to recover it, but in vain. Whilst time was thus being fatally lost, a body of police appeared in the distance, and directed their course towards the boat. The keen eyes of Marzio had already discerned the gambler, and the latter, whose sense of sight was no less acute, had perceived the red mantle and him who wore it. Marzio called to the sailors to leave the

unlucky cloak in the water and set sail without delay, but it was too late.

"Stop the boat, by order of the viceroy!" a voice cried out.

The boat stood still, as if moored; and the police, mounting the deck, were just in time to seize Marzio, who was about casting himself into the sea.

"It is not the will of God!" he exclaimed, and suffered himself to be bound without resistance. Not to attract a crowd, and to avoid any disturbance at this early hour, the police, after squeezing the water from it, quietly threw over him his red cloak to conceal his handcuffed arms. Two of their number, acting as servants, escorted him, one on either side, while the others followed at a distance.

The sheriff, who remained behind on the mole, cried out,

"You in the boat there can proceed on your voyage."

"Excellency! the falcons are returning with the game."

So announced a domestic, who, judging from his manners and appearance, seemed half policeman, half priest. These words, uttered through a key hole in an alcove, stirred under its coverlets a heap of bone and muscle, and caused to spring forth from both sides of the bed two individuals, who at once began to dress themselves.

One was a man, tall, thin, and so bony that his legs moved in his stockings like sticks. His face was yellow as oil, and dotted with small holes like Parmesan cheese; blue circles enclosed his eyes, the pupils of which, though bright, were void of intellect, and fixed like those of a falcon. His efforts to put on his stockings forced open his mouth, disclosing a row of large teeth, two of which, projecting like tusks, were visible even when the lips were closed. On his head he wore a white linen cap, laced and

bound with silk cord of a fiery color ; a white cloth dressing gown, lined with rose color, hung from his shoulders.

The other was a woman : yes, a woman. Her white and black hairs were stiff and curling, as if they had quarreled with each other the whole night long. I have neither the time nor inclination to describe or paint all the personages of my story ; if, therefore, dear reader, you wish to form a precise idea of this creature, you have only to recall to mind the bas-relief representing the death of Count Ugolino, ascribed to Michael Angelo. In the upper part appears the figure of Hunger : examine it well, and fancy that this woman stood as the model for the sculptor.

Whilst dressing himself, the man thus spoke :

“ Carmina, my dear, I hope this business will reinstate me in the viceroy’s favor. A few years ago, he was very indulgent towards the crimes then constantly committed on the frontier of the Papal States ; and, so long as they did not touch the Spaniards, nothing was said of them. Who knows ? perhaps he wished to let all the dust accumulate to furnish work enough for the broom of Sixtus 5th. Now, all at once, he pretends we ought to have more eyes than Argus—than that Argus, as thou knowest, appointed by Jove to guard the cow Io—and more hands than Briareus ; how curious some people are ! When they say I will, they think they have done all. The threads of justice must be always kept going ; if left idle too long they break from rottenness, or will not yield from stiffness.”

“ My love, we must, at any cost, regain the favor of the viceroy ; particularly, since I have penetrated the base design of your deputy to use all his efforts to injure you. The last time the viceroy came to the tribunal, you were unfortunately absent, and the deputy paid court to him as far as the very last step of the palace, and bent to the ground as the viceroy got into his carriage,

as though he would say : 'Highness ! do me the favor to place your feet 'on my neck, instead of the carriage steps.' Had you been present, my love, this honor would have belonged to you, and you would have learned to bend properly, for you are unskillful in that respect."

"Did he really say, my love, to the viceroy, what you have just repeated ?"

"He did ! It seemed to me, at a distance, that he said so."

"Ah ! happy man"

"And the Sunday after that, when I met at mass that ugly old wife of his, she passed by without noticing me ; and I saw her laughing at me. Do not then, my love, spare any effort to regain the viceroy's favor ; if he wants to put people in prison, do you send them to the gallows ; if he wants to hang them, do you cut them into five quarters."

"What folly you talk, my dear ! quarters can only be four ; for you must know, Carmina, that the executioner but I must make haste now, as the sheriff is waiting. There is truth in what you have said there is truth, because if they were not bad people, they would never fall into the hands of justice."

"And suppose they were not bad people, if the master wished thee to strangle them, thou wouldst do it. My judge, obedience is holiness."

"True enough ! Fools believe that Justice weighs in a balance : it is a mistake ; she weighs with a steel-yard, and has two different weights, as Burraschino, the grain merchant, had two false measures, and was sent to the galleys for it. Carmina, my dove, bring me at once some chocolate and biscuit, for this morning I must be strong as iron ; and I have found by experience that fasting weakens the heart."

"My life, go into the office; everything will be ready in a moment"

The judge entered his office, sat down gravely in his arm chair, the back of which was a foot higher than his head, and pulled immediately the bell rope. At the same moment two opposite doors opened, through one of which entered his wife, Carmina, with the chocolate and biscuit, while through the other appeared the sheriff with Marzio handcuffed and covered with a scarlet mantle.

Carmina, from behind the arm chair, regarded Marzio, whom she thought very handsome, as he really was, although very pale and thin. The capital of compassion in her woman's heart at once rose twenty-five per cent., whilst in that of the envious old man it fell a whole franc. Evil is more sensitive than good.

"Captain!" called out the judge, and the sheriff approached with a certain obsequious familiarity. "Captain!" whispered the judge in his ear, "have you handcuffed him firmly?"

The sheriff, thrusting forward his jaw and raising his lower lip, looked as though he would say :

"Give yourself no uneasiness!"

"And is there no danger of any sudden effort?"
And the sheriff repeated the sign.

"Then I need not be at all alarmed?" continued the judge.

"Not at all!" replied the sheriff, shaking his head. "I handcuffed him myself. . . ."

Then putting into his mouth the biscuit which had already been soaked in the chocolate, the judge addressed the prisoner :

"Are you, then, that vile and impious malefactor who, after making the Tiber and other rivers in the dominions of Holy Mother Church flow with blood, hast likewise

dared to commit the most atrocious murders in the happy territories of his Catholic Majesty, King Philip, our lord . . . and the last, which you committed last night, before the blessed image of the Most Holy Virgin?" Here, taking another bite of the biscuit, he continued: "Most Holy Virgin? We will show your tribunals in Rome that it is better to begin late and last long, than to begin early and stop soon. If Pope Sixtus, in four hours before dinner, could seize, try and hang an honest, young Christian Spaniard, who, except for committing murder inside a church, was as innocent as a lamb, we, I say, we will do in less than half of that time, far more wonderful things." Meanwhile he alternately ate and spoke; until, the chocolate being finished, and one biscuit remaining, he suddenly addressed the biscuit in these words: "Biscuit! biscuit! thinkest thou there is no more chocolate to soak thee in? Carmina, my love, oblige me with another cup of chocolate!"

Carmina was off like the wind, and, eager to hear every syllable of the examination, returned as speedily, bringing the chocolate.

The judge, looking at Marzio, continued:

"If in the court of Rome the ax-and-gallows sauce, which Pasquin prepared for Pope Sixtus, is out of fashion, it is just beginning to be in vogue with us. Every body knows that good things make the circuit of the world . . ."

This time the biscuits were all eaten, and there remained a little chocolate in the cup; apostrophizing the chocolate in its turn, he exclaimed: "Chocolate! chocolate! thinkest thou there are no more biscuits to soak in thee? Carmina, my love, go and bring me another biscuit to finish this insolent chocolate with."

Carmina burst forth from her post behind the arm chair and clapping both hands on her hips, replied:

"But Judge, my dear, one can endure a shower, but not a tempest! If you go on at this rate, I shall have to bring a pail full of chocolate and a basket of biscuits at once; and besides, you should take care of your health, for too much chocolate injures the stomach and produces melancholy: enough for to-day, my sweet one. Do you not know that the Emperor Charles 5th went mad from drinking too much chocolate? One can endure a shower, but not a tempest! Why, my love, you appear to me to have changed into an ostrich. . . ."

"And you, do you know what you appear to me to have become? a . . . a . . . a stork."

What an inexplicable thing is this heart of ours! Marzio, up to this moment, heedless of the judge's observations, was occupied with the thought of self destruction. Now, all at once, his eyes falling on these grotesque countenances, and his ears catching the woman's chattering, he was seized by so violent a convulsion of laughter, that he could not restrain himself. The sheriff, whose lips were generally as firmly closed as his handcuffs, could hardly refrain from laughing, and to check himself hid behind Marzio, where, stopping his mouth with the skirt of his coat, he could be neither heard nor seen by the judge. That the judge was enraged, may be readily conceived: he looked upon this merriment as disrespectful to his authority, insulting to his person, an outrage to his dignity, and a crime against the universe—in short, a *connected, complex and incessant* crime. Laying aside his cup of chocolate (for his was the instinct of a beast of prey, whose passion for slaughter surpasses its desire for food,) he cried out:

"Ah! dog, traitor, villain! Thou laughest, eh? Thou darest laugh before the venerable majesty of the Judge of the High Criminal Court of Naples? wait awhile, and I

will make thee laugh more, and louder, and with better reason: since thou art disposed to jest be gay I will make thee dance, with buskins on feet and cap on head, as on a holiday. Captain Gaetanino, up quickly, carry this villain into the trial room, and get ready all the instruments for a preparatory torture, as well as those which cause death, with the great *trespolo*, the *capra*, the *taxillum*, the cords, in short all the apparatus."

Without compassion—for, in the desert of the sheriff's soul, this well had never been dug, or if once dug, had been so completely filled up that every trace of it was forgotten—without compassion then, but with regret, he estimated the throes of agony, the many pangs, the fearful crushing of the bones this unfortunate man must suffer, to compensate for his laughter, perhaps the last that would ever escape his lips. The sheriff.—Hardly had the sheriff and Marzio left the room, when the judge, vain as he was iniquitous, set to work to vent his spleen upon his wife. Assuming an air of reproof, he began by saying:

"Carmina, I have told you a thousand times, that it did not become you to enter a place where you do not belong. You see, now, what has happened, on account of it. This villain, my dear, laughed at you, and treated you with great disrespect."

"At me?" replied the woman, with the deepest conviction. "Indeed, I believe you are mistaken, and that he was laughing at you, my love."

"At me?—~~how~~ at me—he should have thought twice, first" and he rose up, leaning on the arms of the chair, and biting his lips.

"I don't believe he even thought once, my dear; as for myself, thank God, I am not to be laughed at, yet awhile;" and with these words, she turned to an ebony-

framed mirror hanging in the room. The glass was green—which was usually the color of the glass then manufactured in the factories of Murano, near Venice—and the moisture of the walls had melted the quicksilver, and destroyed, in a great measure, its surface. Nature had, indeed, treated Madame Carmina worse than a step-mother; add to this her years, certain infirmities that need not be mentioned, and her morning dishabille; and if these be not enough, the treacherous and soiled green mirror fixed the advantage on the judge's side. She looked at herself in the glass, and was conscious of the contrast. The only instance, I believe, in ancient and modern history; for vanity in woman survives beauty, as the light of the glow worm continues to shine even after the death of the insect. The judge departed triumphant; but he avoided the test of the mirror: had he seen himself reflected there, he would, doubtless, have been convinced that Marzio had laughed at both.

Seated before a long table, having on each side a notary, and all the instruments of torture arrayed in his presence, the excellent judge affected the pride of Scipio Africanus, when he ascended the capitol, surrounded by the ensigns of conquered nations. The sheriff waited for his nod, and two assistants for that of the sheriff . . . so it is: the height of human glory is speedily attained; for infamy there is no depth sufficient.

Marzio stood there like one stupefied. The judge cast upon him a look of defiance, as much as to say, "Now we shall see whether thou wilt laugh."

Meanwhile a notary interrogated the prisoner as to his condition and the particulars of the crime charged against him. The examination being ended, the judge read it over; and, having made an abstract of the proceedings to

aid his memory, turned with a threatening countenance to the unfortunate man, and thus accosted him :

"Now, my fine gentleman, we will attend to you. Marzio Sposito, I declare to you that you are accused, and by this legal process fully convicted: in the first place, of having, in company with your accomplice, Olimpio Geraco, barbarously and with premeditation, murdered the most illustrious Count, Don Francesco Cenci, a Roman gentleman, at Rocca Petrella, on the frontiers of the kingdom ; secondly, of having received the order to kill him, from *all, or from some one* of the family of the said Count Cenci ; in the third place, of having obtained, as a reward for the murder, two thousand sequins, one thousand of which were retained by you, and the other thousand given to the said Olimpio ; fourthly, of having committed robbery; by stealing from the murdered Count Cenci, a scarlet cloak, laced with gold, which was found upon you at the moment of your arrest ; in the fifth place, of having, during the past night, treacherously murdered your accomplice, Olimpio Geraco, by stabbing him four times with a cutting, or perforating instrument, thus causing the almost instantaneous death of the said Geraco. You are now exhorted to confess the truth with regard to these five charges, which I have just distinctly read to you, upon your oath ; not because justice requires any further testimony, but for your own good and advantage in this world, as well as in the next ; and it is to comply with the spirit of the law, that I thus admonish you, superfluous though it seem. This most excellent notary will administer the oath."

The notary who was seated at the left of the judge, seized a crucifix, and dictated the formula in these words :

" Say : I swear on this image of Jesus crucified. . . ."

"I do not swear. . . ."

"Why do you not swear, if all swear?"

"All lie. Does it seem to you natural for a man to swear voluntarily his own ruin and death?"

"But you should have avoided the necessity," observed the notary.

"What matters it to you, if he wishes you to swear?" interrupted the judge, angrily. "He is doing his duty, and no one can harm him for it. You wish, Sposito, to exercise the privilege the law gives you, and you are right. Master Giacinto, it is your turn. . . ."

In the same manner that the skillful artisan prepares himself to commence a piece of cunning workmanship, master Giacinto, who was the executioner, wonderfully seconded by his assistants, quick as thought, undressed, bound, and drew up in the air the arms of the miserable man.

Marzio suffered dreadful agony without heaving a sigh: only when they let him down gently on the pavement, his evil genius whispered in his ear; "What art thou now?" and memory, like a mirror, reflected all the vicissitudes of his life. Betrayed by friends, outraged by men in his dearest affections, these had proved but scourges to his soul: his tormentors bore the aspect of love. Filial love made him a brigand; passionate love, a perfidious and deceitful man; love for Beatrice, a murderer. Of what character was this last love? He was at a loss himself to explain it, for it often happened that, in thinking of Annetta, his mind reverted to Beatrice, and *vice versa*; that his soul wandered from a desperate to an impossible love, and from an impossible to a desperate one. His life, perpetually accompanied by bitter cares, was like iron held to a revolving wheel; it emitted sparks, but was consumed. He no longer cared for anything. How tire-

some becomes this mortal life, when one knows not how or whither to direct his steps! Often, on the shores of the Bay of Naples, stretched upon the earth, with his shoulders supported by a rock, had Marzio contemplated, hour after hour, the surface of the sea, with a heart full of weariness, and so absorbed by remorse and sorrow, that even the beautiful bay failed to inspire cheerful emotions. His strength became exhausted; his hands and forehead were always bathed in cold drops of sweat: an incessant irritation in his throat occasioned constant fits of coughing. One day, of a sudden, his mouth filled with glutinous-humor, of the taste of lead . . . he spat it out . . . it was blood. Trembling from head to foot, he ran to the mirror. . . . Good God! what horror! Blood dyed the upper part of his cheeks as the rays of the setting sun light up the summits of the hills; the last farewell of the expiring day! Many times, with a razor to his throat, or a pistol at his temples, he was on the point of ending a life of crime and misery; but always checked the rising impulse, so strong was his desire that Beatrice should first be free and happy. A great portion of Marzio was dead; much of his life and courage, by too frequent exercise, had become exhausted. This last proof, although endured with constancy, so cast him down that he looked upon death as a blessing, and solicited it. Scarcely was he seated, when the judge ordered:

"In a quarter of an hour, master Giacinto, thou wilt repeat with the cord; if, meanwhile, he wishes to drink, give him some vinegar and water;" and, with these words, he moved, as if to depart.

"Judge!" cried Marzio, with a feeble voice, and shedding tears, "should I be induced to confess, might I count on a favor?"

"My son," said the judge, soothingly, at the same time,

going kindly up to him, "I will do what I can: I will recommend thee to the viceroy. The duke is magnanimous and liberal, and most gracious in the bestowal of his favors. You, sir notary, meanwhile, may record that the accused proposes to confess, *ergo*, the accusations are true. This is one step gained in the process, and which can never be canceled. Well, then, my son, what hast thou to say?"

"The favor that I would ask, is not perhaps such as you imagine. . . ."

"What then, dost thou ask? Courage, my son, open thy whole heart to me, as thou wouldst to thy own father."

"So soon as I have confessed my errors, I should like to be executed. . . ."

"As to that, do not doubt the excellent heart of the viceroy. . . . I also will aid thee."

"I only wish to die by the ax, not by the cord. . . ."

"If that is all," interrupted master Giacinto, who could not hold his tongue in matters so nearly concerning his profession; "the viceroy has the soul of a Cæsar in such matters. . . ."

"Silence!" cried the judge in a severe voice, "these things do not concern thee. . . ."

"I thought they did . . . but I am mistaken . . . your pardon, Excellency! . . ."

"Listen: with regard to thy first request to be at once put to death, be assured, I will attend to that; as to the second, the viceroy must be consulted; it is not my privilege to cut off one's head! This privilege belongs here to the nobility, who are justly jealous of it; but, my dear fellow, to satisfy thee, I will make an express application to the viceroy."

The deputy, who had arrived in the heat of this affectionate conversation, and who was always on the

watch to disparage the judge with the government, now interposed :

"My dearest Don Boccale," said he, "this responsibility you can take upon yourself ; for who will think of questioning your proceedings, when every day, by your zeal and sagacity, you are rising in the estimation of the king our lord ? "

The trap laid by the deputy consisted in this : if, influenced by vanity, the judge could be persuaded to invade the privileges of the nobility, the latter would rise up *en masse* against him ; but the judge was not a fish to be caught by such a drag net, and he thus dryly replied :

"Signor Deputy, you will do me the favor to postpone your advice until it is requested. Well now, my son . . . speak . . . what hast thou to say ? "

Marzio had let fall his head on his right shoulder and closed his eyes, whence big tears flowed freely, silent witnesses of his suffering.

"Come," continued the judge, "courage, my son, confess . . . confess . . ."

Marzio was silent. The judge then rudely pressed his collar bone ; shrinking back, he opened his eyes and sorrowfully asked :

"What do you wish ? "

"Keep thy promise, and confess."

"How ! So soon ! Where is the priest ? "

"This has nothing to do with the sacramental confession ; thou wilt make that by and by, my good fellow ; it is the legal confession we require : first the lightning, then the thunder ; a little noise, and all is over . . ."

"And what must I confess ? "

"That is too good ! What I have told thee before, my son : shall I read it over again ? "

"Ah ! no : it is true ; I deserve death."

"Confess, then, and confirm in all its particulars the act of accusation."

"As you wish, provided you will kill me at once."

"Try a little, my son, and see if you can sign this paper; and you, you lazy fellows, bring me a pen . . . new and well made . . . dip it well in the ink . . . take it, Sposito, and if in life thou hast had a bad temper, show, at least, in death an amiable one. Signor Deputy, I pray you, mark what I say; could the duke hear it, he is so fond of a joke, he would be delighted. Softly . . . so . . . nicely . . . with three fingers . . . my dear fellow."

But Marzio's fingers, almost paralyzed, let the pen fall, and, with a yawn, he murmured :

"How much more generous are assassins in the woods than in the court ! . . . I cannot sign."

"That cursed Giacinto might have been a little more sparing of the cord !" muttered the judge, turning reprovingly towards the sheriff.

"What do you say, Excellency ? I treated him most affectionately ; had I administered the cord to yourself I could not have been more considerate."

The judge, wholly intent on Marzio, did not notice the last words of the sheriff. All his efforts to make Marzio sign the act of accusation being fruitless, he ordered it to be closed, with the formula requisite to supply the want of the signature of the accused. Having signed, sealed, and powdered the papers, he deposited them carefully in his bosom, and thus addressed the ushers :

"I now turn over this poor man to you ; remember that he is flesh, and baptized like yourselves ; and remember, too, that if human justice cannot pardon him, divine may ; hereafter, who knows but his intercession may be of service to us in paradise ? Comfort him with wine, pre-

serves, and broth ; let him want for nothing . . . he must live."

Marzio had fallen into his former lethargy.

Do you not think the judge charitable ? and mark, besides, that though dead two centuries and a half, I have seen and heard this judge, and have therefore striven to depict him. The judge felt much love for Marzio ; he wished him well for many reasons, particularly for one : through him he hoped to present himself triumphantly to the viceroy ; through him to regain lost favor ; through him to wound the odious Deputy ; through him to exhibit his own importance ; through him to regale the people with the always agreeable spectacle of a criminal tragedy ; through him to make himself the topic of conversation throughout all Naples for three days ; finally, through him, to dangle an order at his button hole, and secure an increase of pay. For which considerations, and others that need not be mentioned, it was highly important that Marzio should live—but to die on the scaffold ! Hence the concern of the excellent judge for the preservation of the condemned. Do you not think mine a charitable judge ?

The judge hastened to present himself at the palace of Don Pietro Girone, Duke of Ossuna, Viceroy of Naples for Philip 3d, King of Spain. In passing through the antechamber, he, first of all, observed, with no little disgust, that the guards and attendants failed to show him the attention which the importance of the case seemed to merit ; then, considering that they could not read in his face the great news of which he was the bearer, he felt disposed to excuse their ignorance ; seeing, however, no disposition on their part to be civil, but, on the contrary, an apparent determination to be more and more indifferent to his dignity, he doubly aggravated what he had just be-

fore felt inclined to pardon. If they treated him with less distinction than they did Don Gennaro Boccale, it seemed to him they ought, at all events, to fear the man who might, at any moment, send them to the scaffold; but the attendants of the duke, most insolent servants of an insolent master, neither cared for nor feared him. The judge consoled his offended vanity by revolving in his mind the necessity of humoring the petulance of servants in great families, who, for the most part, were composed of vile mechanics, riotous men, and rascals; but the greatest mortification awaited him in the antechamber, where, after bruising hands and feet in his struggles to be introduced to the viceroy, and enduring for a long time a portion of those torments he had so often visited on the wretches who had fallen into his hands, a secretary presented himself to inquire what he wanted. The judge replied: "Business of the highest importance," and begged that he might be permitted an interview with his Highness, the Viceroy. The secretary observed that business of far greater importance was now occupying the attention of the viceroy, and that he could not grant an audience.

"But the business on which I am come seriously concerns the safety of his Majesty's dominions."

"Indeed? But I tell you it cannot be more urgent than that which now engages the viceroy's attention."

"Allow me to inquire how you can divine the business that brings me here?"

And the secretary, with a no less satirical sneer, readily answered:

"I know not your business, but I do that of the viceroy, who has few equals, and no superior."

This reply confounded the judge.

Let us glance at the business which, at this moment,

occupied the most powerful duke of Ossuna. His Eminence Cardinal Zappata (the very man who gave rise to the proverb, "he preached well, but practised badly,") had sent the duke, as a present from Madrid, a beautiful parrot, and he was amusing himself with it. Not that Don Pedro was a spendthrift of his time, quite the reverse; he was famous for incessant zeal in state affairs, and deserved his reputation; but it happened that just at this moment the whim seized him to play with the parrot, and he did not wish to be disturbed. The bow that is always stretched breaks, and a little repose adds vigor to unquiet spirits.

It became necessary for the good judge to explain to the secretary the object of this visit, and he listened somewhat carelessly to the narration; but suddenly in the midst of the discourse, he snatched the papers from the judge, and, shrugging his shoulders, exclaimed, "I understand!"

The secretary entered unexpectedly, and surprised the viceroy, who was teaching the parrot. . . . The viceroy, vexed at being detected at this moment in his frivolous amusement, cast a disdainful look upon the secretary, who, though a skillful pilot of the court, seeing the waves disturbed, was wholly at a loss what saint to invoke. No better course suggesting itself, he approached the parrot; but the bird, frightened, snapped at his hand, and tore his skin. The secretary muttered, in a low voice,

"Curse the bird!" Then, loudly, "lovely, superb parrot! . . ."

But the angry viceroy, in a severer tone, demanded:

"Inigo, who called you?"

The secretary, likewise irritated, revenged himself on the judge, by saying:

"Your Highness! the criminal judge, who, asking your

pardon, is more troublesome than a sore, has been making so much noise in the antechamber, by loudly asserting that his business concerned the safety of the king and the welfare of the state, that I was obliged to prevent his intruding into the presence of your highness, to snatch these papers from him, in order to present them to you, and free you from his importunities."

"We know by experience," said the viceroy, with lordly haughtiness, and extending his hand to receive the papers, "that what other men enjoy abundantly is denied ourselves—a moment of repose. Proceed, Don Inigo."

"Your Highness! a brigand of the Roman States, during the past night, treacherously killed one of his companions near the chapel of the Madonna of Buonconsiglio. He was arrested this morning, and made his confession under torture. The judge, in view of his voluntary confession, is of opinion he should be condemned to death without farther proceedings, to check the murders and robberies which, according to the signor judge, are becoming very frequent."

"And is it for this you have rushed so uncereemoniously into my apartment, like a bombshell into the citadel of an enemy?"

"Your Highness! deign to remember that the fault does not lie with the shell, but with him who sent it."

"The fault is never yours. You are like the assistants at the sacrifices of Jupiter, one of whom charged upon the other the slaughter of the ox; while the penalty fell finally upon the knife, which, though innocent, suffered for all."

The secretary, anxious to soften the duke, laughed heartily at the aptness of his witticism. The viceroy, appeased, seized a pen, and was about to sign his approval of the judge's application, when he suddenly stopped:

"By Saint James! is it nothing to sign a sentence of death? There must be some difference between signing and suffering it. To pass at one stroke from a world where the bright sun shines to one where I can see nothing but eternal darkness . . . seems to me in truth an ugly journey." Here he dipped his pen in the ink. "It is, also, I apprehend," he added, "easier to raise the anchor of life on a January day in Stockholm, than on an April day in Naples." Then rising, he approached the balcony, and looking up at the sky, continued: "Eye of heaven, why dost thou appear so beautiful to our eyes, when we must so soon leave thee? Thy divine ray should illumine things worthy of its divinity. The night alone should witness the punishment of crimes committed in its shades. Why should the day be outraged by the chastisement of offences it has never shone upon?"

These refined observations did not spring from the duke's heart. They were ostentatiously assumed for the occasion, to make the secretary forget the vile word that had disgraced his lips, when surprised teaching his parrot. Meanwhile, the parrot, to increase his confusion and ill temper, repeated with a sonorous voice this word, as if to mock both the duke and his pretended philosophy. Seating himself hastily, and without glancing at the testimony, he began to sign:

"Leave the villain to his deserts . . . go . . . launch him into eternity."

But the parrot, either struck by the novelty of the proceeding, or vexed at not being more carressed, snatched the pen from the viceroy's hand.

Montezuma does not wish him to die . . . or, rather, Montezuma reproves the viceroy for signing the sentence of death without first examining the papers of the process.

The parrot is right ; the viceroy wrong. Thanks for the hint, Montezuma. If I were the king, perhaps, who knows ? as a reward *for long and honorable services*, it might be that some day, thou wouldst find thyself decorated with an image, either of a beast like thyself, or of a saint, I cannot say like me ; but instead, as I am only viceroy, I will give thee a whole Majorca biscuit. I would send thee willingly as a counselor to the Escorial, to make known to the most eminent Cardinal Zappata, that, however numerous the parrots which come from his hands, I will send them back counselors."

Don Pedro began to read with great diligence, yet thinking all the while on what was to be done. History enumerates among the many qualifications of the Duke of Ossuna, the faculty of fixing his attention on several objects at once, such as reading one thing and thinking of another, or thinking of many things at the same time, or conversing with several persons, without losing a syllable spoken, and replying understandingly, and this, too, while engaged in writing despatches on important matters. I said faculty, I should have said defect ; for this habit virtually injures the intellect, as looking askance spoils the sight.

Now, whilst he was reading and meditating, he thought in this wise : there could not be a more opportune occasion to provoke the pope ; yet, friendly relations ought, in every possible way, to be cultivated with him, for he has cast himself into the arms of France, absolving Henry 4th, and renewing ancient ties of amity with that kingdom. France, the civil war being over, would soon become gayer and stronger than ever, by virtue of the marvelous facility she possesses of repairing in one day the ruin of a year ; whilst, on the contrary, Spain expires, like Croesus, with her mouth full of gold : her navy, the con-

stant study of King Philip 2d, for ten years, annihilated in a gale of wind: the Low Countries stuck in her palate, like a hook in the mouth of a dog fish; Germany always extending her hand to seize, and never allowing herself to grasp; six hundred millions of ducats expended; twenty millions of men destroyed; filled with ruin, and hated by all the world, and nothing remaining of past greatness but her pride. By degrees the storm is gathering against the House of Austria, Germany and Spain. As for the pope's being seduced from Spain, that was no reason why he should hate her, since, emboldened by the late acquisition of Ferrara, he was the very man to revive his pretensions to the kingdom of Naples; French succor would not be wanting, nor the millions of gold which Sixtus 5th had accumulated in the Castle of San Angelo: Clement 8th was a better tempered man than Sixtus, and one could come to terms with him: besides, being old, it was natural he should wish a cessation of political troubles, that he might lay the foundation of his own family's greatness, a matter very near his heart, and free the States of the Church from the bands of robbers which infested them. These are found in all countries after a war; and Rome had just then terminated her enterprise against Ferrara; indeed, her territory has always been classic ground for brigands. Now, in consideration of the great pleasure it would afford the pope to have an opportunity of exhibiting to the world his determination to restore order in his dominions, it seemed to the duke that this skein, which he held in his hand, ought to be disentangled at Rome and then and then, what pleased him most—and this was the principal reason—by this means to mortify the secretary, who had surprised him teaching his parrot, and the judge who had sent him. Thus mixed with dross is the gold when taken from the

mine, and for this time destiny, by playing the fool, refined the gold.

“Don Inigo ; Montezuma, begging your pardon, showed more acuteness than you, when he persuaded me to read papers you have not read, but which you must read. This is a business scarcely begun ; and it would be necessary to cut the head of the thread in order to lose every trace of it. This man must be sent under a good escort to Rome ; accompanied by such a letter as will be acceptable to his holiness. You will particularly examine the papers with a view of ascertaining why these crimes, although committed in our jurisdiction, always seem to have been instigated by persons of high rank resident in Rome. Henceforth, Signor Secretary, you will make no report to me until after a diligent perusal of the papers relating to the subject ; remember this. As to the judge, I myself have observed, when visiting the tribunals, that he is too often absent from his post, to attend properly to the important duties of his office ; besides, age begins to weaken his judgement, of which he never had too much in his palmiest days. Send him his dismissal, with the pension he merits, and promote to the vacant seat his deputy, a man of promptitude and well bred. May fortune always favor us as now, for she has saved me from signing a sentence of death, and afforded me an opportunity of gaining the good will of the high priest, which wise princes should always secure, if they wish to rule their subjects with absolute authority.”

And all this resulted from the fact that the Duke of Ossuna was surprised in the act of teaching his parrot a vulgar word ! Do you laugh ? Ah ! if this were a proper time for laughter, I would conduct you into the obscurity where the destiny of nations is hatched, and I would show you how, from more trifling and less honest

causes, spring wars, ruin of kingdoms, destruction of peoples, and other scourges fatal to humanity.

The secretary left the presence of the viceroy, bending as with the weight of a thousand pounds. When officials receive a reproof, they strive to cast the blame on their inferiors; as a stone rolls down so far as it can descend; but no, the comparison does not seem apt; I should say rather, like the flash of discontent, which, bursting forth in high places, swiftly seeks the most secret by ways of office, where scattered among many, it is either not felt at all, or, if felt, disregarded.

The ill humored secretary, as he passed the impatient judge, said, in a troubled voice, "Wait!" In about twenty minutes afterwards, the secretary, more ill humored than before, repassed the more impatient judge, on his way to the viceroy's apartment, and said, "Wait!" In an hour's time the secretary again issued from the viceroy's room, and to the poor judge, who was nearly bursting with rage, again repeated, for the third time, in the most doleful manner, the word, "Wait!"

The judge's head turned from the door of the viceroy's room to that of the secretary's, like a sunflower: at length, after unutterable agony, the secretary returned for the fourth time, and, depositing in the hands of the judge a sealed packet of papers, eyed him from head to foot, bowed, and, without saying a word, withdrew.

"Humph!" muttered the judge, "these Spaniards smoke like chimneys: I wager this man, in his own country, was a bell ringer in some convent, and never had anything better to eat than what the friars gave him; and now he has the impudence to eye me from head to foot . . . to play the grandee with me, who can boast as much nobility as the king! And what is all this; this packet he has placed in my hands? Perhaps a mark of

attention and regard to my person and dignity : it must be this ; I could find no fault with him for that ; indeed, I should praise him for it :” and he started off, fast as his legs could carry him.

Before proceeding further with the judge, I must dispose of the secretary. When he returned home, he said to his son, who was overjoyed to meet him, “ My son, let us pack our trunks and return to Spain, for here, in Naples, the wind is no longer in our favor.” “ Signor !” replied the son, “ what new thing has happened ? Have you, unfortunately, shown any want of respect for our holy religion ?” “ Worse, my son, worse than that.” “ Have you, alas ! slain in a duel some gentleman of the court ?” “ Worse than that.” “ Have you dared to aspire to the affections of her Highness the Vice-queen ?” “ Worse still.” “ You astonish me ; what is it, then ?” “ I have surprised the most powerful Duke of Ossuna, in the act of teaching vulgar words to his parrot.” “ Heavens ! It is all over with us, then.”

Let us now return to the judge. He reached his office out of breath ; he sat down, with the deputy at his side, and the notaries and clerks around him ; and then ordered into his presence the policemen, the executioner with his assistants, and the victim, who was supported by the arms, while his head hung down like one intoxicated. The judge looked up, and seeing the attention of all fixed upon him, gave them a glance of triumph, broke the seal, and began to read.

“ How ? How ? What treason is this ?”

“ What has happened ? What is the matter ? What has been done ?” was repeated in chorus, all around.

“ I am betrayed ;” and bursting into tears, he covered his eyes with his hands.

The deputy, at his side, cast a stealthy glance upon

the papers; and, seeing his own name there, divined in a twinkling the mystery; without more ado, he at once seized the document and began to read, leaning his head against the back of his arm chair. The knowledge that he had been promoted to the dignity of judge, in the place of Don Gennaro Boccale, made him almost frantic with joy, but he restrained his delight; and turning his neck in the manner of a Jesuit, and with a sneer on his lips, which were thin as the edge of a razor, he said:

"Advocate Boccale, (he at one blow struck off the title of Judge,) you may well believe that I am deeply pained at your misfortune; much more so, since I must beg of you to leave the house by to-morrow. . . ."

"I believe that you are not to be believed, Signor Deputy. At all events, I make my exit by the staircase: take care, Don Giacchero, that you do not some day go out by the window." With these words, Don Gennaro, mad with fury, rose from his seat, and, departing from the palace, with the air of a Scipio when he went into exile, exclaimed: "Ungrateful tribunal! thou shalt not have my cloak."

Thus was the new ax substituted for the old; and poor accused wretches soon learned that its edge was fresh and keen. The new judge ascertained from the despatches of the viceroy, that Marzio's sentence was not to be executed, but that he was to be sent under a sufficient guard to Monsignore the Governor of Rome; which was accordingly done by the lately appointed officials, who, like new brooms, swept well and thoroughly.

The dismissed Boccale, forced to reside in another house, remained for some days as stupefied as though he had been stunned by a blow on the head, and, from time to time, gave birth to a smile, the faint lightning that precedes the tempest: at length the tempest burst forth

in all its fury and swept away his intellect : his heart had been wasted from time immemorial, and there had only remained to him (miserable relic !) the ability to torment. Every thing perished, except the rage of the criminal judge, and with reason ; for this quality requires no intellect to sustain it, brute instinct being alone sufficient. In his wild delirium, he founded a high court of justice, with policeman, accuser, judge and executioner ; and all these offices and attributes he accumulated on his own head, solving, as a madman, questions that had frequently puzzled the wisest minds.

The dismissed Boccale began by putting on trial all the fowls in his court yard ; pretexts were not wanting, and, although his crazy brain could not distinguish the innocent from the guilty, yet, proceeding treacherously, he declared that *all* or *some* of them had committed the crime ; or, that all had been accomplices in the act, or made no effort to prevent it. In consideration of all which he pronounced them guilty, and—invoking the name of Him who is always ready and willing to aid those who call upon Him—condemned them to instant death. Little cared Donna Carmina for this sentence ; yet, her heart being inclined to mercy, the fowls were not dealt with so summarily, but carried, at reasonable intervals, to the pot, where they remained buried till they had made a good broth. When it was all over with the fowls, the ex-judge proceeded vigorously against Giordano, the house dog. This brave animal had for many years protected his master's property from robbers, and had once saved his life ; but all was in vain ; fidelity, and affection, and generous acts, could not shelter him from the fury of the crazy judge ; he must die. Little also cared Donna Carmina for this ; on the contrary, she was somewhat pleased ; for the dog, besides being old, was blind of an eye.

The dog being dead, the cat, the delight of Donna Carmina, had her turn. If ever there was an innocent cat in the world, it was certainly this one. In many years of good conduct, but one crime could be laid to her charge; she had once stolen a fresh cheese from the cupboard. Alas ! Saints even sometimes sin, and temptation overcame the strength of the cat ; the cruel judge regarded not the weakness of her sex, her natural inclination for fresh cheese, nor her prolonged fasting ; since it was proven on the trial that she had not tasted food for four and twenty hours before the theft was committed ; every circumstance in her favor was rejected ; she was found guilty, and sentenced to death. Donna Carmina threw herself at the feet of the inexorable judge, supplicating with bitter tears the pardon of her beloved cat ; the judge appeared to be moved, and said : " We will see ! " This consoled the woman, and she felt quite sure of saving the cat's life. Alas ! fatal security ! One fine morning as she rose from bed the first object that greeted her eyes was the cat, hanging by its neck. Although accustomed to daily spectacles of horror, she had never witnessed one equal to this, and, rushing out of the room, she filled the house and neighborhood with her screams, and heaped insult on insult upon her husband. At the height of the injury, when, armed with a knife, she strove to cut the fatal rope, and remove the beloved corpse from the ignominious scaffold, to deposit it in an honorable grave, the judge opposed her resolutely, saying, she must not disturb the execution of justice, but must respect the venerable majesty of the law. Imagine the exasperation of these two individuals ! Their endearing expressions were now changed to frightful menaces, and from bandying offensive words they came to blows ; nor was the judge the victor in the strife, while

the fury of the contest was manifested in his plucked hair and scratched and bruised face.

The judge being of the opinion that though he might pardon as a man, he could not as a magistrate, now began in secret the trial of Donna Carmina, for violating his personal dignity and preventing the execution of justice, and other offences against the magistrate whilst in the performance of his duties; in short, he brought all the charges in the criminal code to bear against Donna Carmina. She was condemned, and the judge pronounced the sentence of death, and from that day forward exerted himself to the utmost to put it into execution.

One night, while Donna Carmina was quietly sleeping, her good husband quietly passed a cord around her neck, and suddenly drew it up to the iron bar at the top of the bed. This being done, he composed himself to sleep, and on the following morning, sat down on the bed side, awaiting the surprise of Donna Carmina at finding herself hung.

He was taken to the madhouse, where, one day, for the sake of occupation, being unable to hang others, he hung himself from the iron bars of his room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TORTURE.

"BARBARIGO. He shed no tears.

LOREDANO. He cried out twice.

BARBARIGO. A saint had done so,

Even with the crown of glory in his eye,

At such inhuman artifice of pain

As was forced on him; but he did not cry

For pity; not a word nor groan escaped him,

And those two shrieks were not in supplication,

But wrung from pangs, and followed by no prayers."

BYRON. "THE TWO FOSCARI."

BEATRICE loved the sun of autumn, the twilight rays, and the long shadows from the west. Often, accompanied by her sister in law, Donna Louisa, whom she had learned to love as a sister, and revere as a mother, she found pleasure in strolling through the streets of Rome, followed by a servant dressed in black and two or three liveried attendants, as was then the custom with Roman patricians. One day, during the usual walk, they reached the Piazza Farnese: proceeding thence by the street of Corte Savella they entered the Via Giulia. In this street, Beatrice attentively observed a building of lugubrious appearance, dark, huge, without windows, or other openings, except a door which was so low that no one could enter it without stooping. Above this door was the half figure, in marble, of a Christ, with arms extended, as though he would say to the sorrowful guest about to enter: "When the anguish of suffering shall overcome thee, think, if thou art innocent, what I, though most innocent, have

endured : if guilty, reflect that, whenever thou turnest to me with a penitent heart, thou wilt find my arms extended to receive thee into my bosom."

A thick, damp mist saddened the sky : and the moist vapory air rising from the Tiber fell in drops from the walls and shrouded the entire building. Beatrice remained a long time looking at this dismal edifice ; being told it was the Prison of Corte Savella, she touched lightly the arm of her sister in law, and said :

"Does it not seem to thee to weep?"

"Who?"

"This prison."

"Many, indeed, must be the tears shed within its walls ; and should they gush out, I would not be much astonished?"

"Louisa ! What is the object of these wallets, fastened by twine to the walls and reaching almost to the earth?"

At this moment there passed by a Roman plebeian, who, having heard the question of the girl, and attracted by the unaffected grace and beauty of both ladies, replied, in a petulant manner and sarcastic tone :

"They are snares laid by the prisoners to catch the charity of passers by : but just now charity is neither caught nor given"

And another plebeian, coming up, said :

"It is not so. Those bags dangle there, eternally empty, to remind one of the charitable souls of priests."

The ladies looked serious at these words ; and, when sure that no one saw them, put all the money they had into the bags and went away.

"It is not the money," observed Beatrice, "but the idea that others think of thee and aid thee so far as they can that should prove the greatest consolation to the prisoners. Nor can it be said that the lightning does no good,

for sometimes it illuminates the road and warns the bewildered pilgrim of the abyss beneath him."

"Truly," replied Donna Louisa, "it must be a great consolation to those immured in this sepulcher of the living, too feel that some one pities them . . . but I should not like to be in their place."

"We are but leaves in the breath of Providence; and near those dolorous walls I can understand why Jesus Christ ranked visiting prisoners among the noblest works of charity. Look well, and thou wilt see above the door of the prison what makes the visitor recoil, and with trembling lips whispers to him: 'Begone, lest the judge suspect thee to be an accomplice of the prisoner, and confine thee also;' as if warned to stand clear of the falling tree that, when fallen, he may return and gather the wood for fuel. It is the rigor of stony hearts that dissuades from pitying the guilty, because the very fact of one's being in prison is to him confirmatory of guilt, and declares the punishment well merited, and the legal authority infallible: there is . . . But alas! should I recount all the fantasies piled above the prison door, threatening visitors from afar, it would be a great and troublesome undertaking: it is no great wonder, therefore, that poor prisoners ordinarily pass their lives without sympathy."

Thus conversing on this melancholy topic, they reached home at dusk. Don Giacomo, with his family, had found shelter in the ancient palace of the Cenci, and under this roof all now lived, partly in dread, partly in security.

In the evening the palace of the Cencis was generally thronged by the friends and acquaintances of the family, attracted thither by the charms of social intercourse and courteous hospitality; but this evening, although the second hour after dark had struck, no one yet made his appearance. The members of the family struggled hard to

engage in lively conversation ; but often the subject failed to call forth a response, and questions and replies grew gradually briefer and duller : amusement even became oppressive : every one sought to remain alone in communion with himself ; but their own silence terrified them : then burst forth the frolic mirth of the children, which, like a roar of laughter at a funeral, made them shudder and hasten to divert their painful thoughts by another effort at conversation. Donna Louisa first spoke :

"It seems to me a silent humor prevails among us this evening : let us take Orlando Furioso, and try to raise our spirits with some of his marvelous exploits."

"As for myself," said Beatrice, "I do not fancy his manners ; they seem rather saucy than good natured ; besides, I do not like such trifling reading : let us read, instead, if you please, the Jerusalem Delivered."

"I should like to hear it," added briefly Don Giacomo.

"But you do not always think as now," said Louisa. "For my part, I never change, and I think now as I always did of Monsieur Ludovico : fantasies, superstitions, marvels, lovers, battles, good or guilty passions, tears, smiles, earth, heaven, and hell ; all were sung by that blessed genius. Who has assimilated himself more to ever varied, ever beautiful nature than he ? Look at him, like a cloud in summer, wandering gayly in the evening air, and changing its form every moment ! When speaking of a poet, it almost seems to me I become one myself : his verses, as they flit past my memory, shake their wings all pregnant with poetry. Tell me, I pray, does not Armida rival Alcina ? Certainly ; but in a poem so solemn as Tasso's, levity offends, while it pleases in the gay cantos of Ariosto ; and as the devils, sorcerers, incantations, and woods guarded by female demons, charm in the Orlando, because they seem to be at home there, so do they displease in the

Jerusalem. Ariosto appears to me more considerate than Tasso ; for the former, sporting with these fables, seeks to banish them from men's minds, while the latter, treating them seriously, fixes them there. In solemn poems, a good poet should exhibit religion, purified from vulgar errors, and not administer evil to the ignorant as a medicine. We should believe in the devil, and, to save us from his temptations, in God ; but not in the enchantress, Armida, and the sorcerers, Ismeneus and Idrottus ; this would be sinful : it, therefore, seems to me that Tasso, having accredited these injurious fables in a religious poem, does not deserve well of mankind."

"Heavens! Louisa, thou defendest thy Orlando

' Like a bear, which in its stony den,
The Alpine hunter has assailed.'

I yield: let us read, if it pleases thee, the story of Ariodante and Ginevra."

"Yes, let us have it," added Don Giacomo, "since that of Olindo and Sophronia is altogether too sad. . . ."

"We do not wish any thing melancholy," exclaimed Donna Louisa ; "still, if we liked such subjects, we could find them in the Orlando. Where is there a more pathetic story than that of Brandimarte and Fiordiligi, or that of Zerbino and Isabella ?"

"Thou hast said well," observed Beatrice ; "yet the misfortunes of Olindo and Sophronia excite my tears, as though they had actually transpired ; while Ariosto's tales seem to me wholly imaginary : and, then, I am always under an apprehension he will say something to make me laugh. But proceed ; let us have the story of Ginevra."

Donna Louisa, a little proud of her victory, having found the book, opened and placed it before Don Giacomo, saying :

"You begin."

No sooner had Don Giacomo cast his eyes on the volume than he turned pale, and quickly replied :

"No . . . no . . . you must read first."

"I will begin: I was mistaken; the story does not commence at the sixth canto, but the fifth;" and turning over some leaves of the book, she gracefully began to repeat from the stanza "*All the other animals on earth*," as far as the lines :

"He, after frequent prayers, from off his head
His helmet raised, and that made manifest,
Which in the canto following I will tell,
If it shall please you then the tale to hear."

"Enough," said Donna Louisa, ceasing to read; "let some one else try."

"I pray thee, Louisa," implored Beatrice, "continue: thy sweet voice does for Orlando, what a fine dress does for beauty; as thine Ariosto says, '*A handsome mantle often adds to beauty*.'"

"Thou hast a gilded tongue! Know that flattery is one of the worst sins. However, not in virtue of thy praises, but for the love I bear thee, I am willing to gratify thee in this, as in everything in my power."

At this moment, without being announced, and as if intimate with the family, a young man of handsome features, with blue eyes, and fair hair, in the costume of a prelate, stepped on the threshold of the door. He bowed to no one, but standing silent and immovable, began to study the group of heads before him.

Donna Louisa, unconscious of his presence, with a trembling voice, continued : canto sixth :

"Unhappy he, who, evil working, thinks
His evil deeds will always rest concealed ;

For though all else be silent, the blue air,
The earth itself wherein they're buried
Proclaim the secret: God himself permits
Sin oftentimes to guide the heedless sinner
To such a pass, though unrevealed by others,
That he betrays the secret unawares."

The stranger, hearing these verses, wished to retire as he had come, unnoticed; but this appeared somewhat difficult; for Don Giacomo, raising his head, perceived him, and called out:

"Welcome, Guido!"

"Why, you have an academy here. In Rome such literary assemblages do not end well."

"There is no danger," replied Don Giacomo; "we are all one family, and, notwithstanding your addition to our numbers, I hope we shall always remain so."

"I hope so, with all my heart; and, such being the case, be so good, Donna Louisa, as to continue your reading."

In fact, Monsignore Guido, being betrothed to Beatrice, was considered one of the Cenci family. All the Roman youth knew of it, and envied the happiness of the successful suitor. It was known also at court, and by the pope, who was grieved at it, because he knew Guido to be a man of fine talents and elegant manners, and hoped, at some future day, to send him as his legate on a foreign mission. He was likewise displeased, because Guido had not asked his consent to the marriage, nor even consulted him; nor was he likely to approve Guido's engagement, when, at the same time, he continued to wear the prelati-cal costume.

Maffeo Barberini, a cardinal of great renown, being intimate with Guido, informed him of all that was said at court, that he might govern himself accordingly. He

likewise, having ascertained that the petition of Beatrice had not yet been received by the pope, withdrew the memorial from the office, lest it should be seen by Clement, and excite suspicions in a soul naturally mistrustful.

Guido accosted Beatrice with graceful freedom, and was about to seize her hand to convey it to his lips; but instead of giving her hand, she rose resolutely to her feet, and beckoned him to follow her. She led him into the recess of a window, the large curtains of which completely concealed them.

They remained hidden but an instant—only one instant—no longer time than a death-stricken man would require to commend his soul to Jesus and Mary before expiring—and then came forth with countenances that indicated an eternal rupture, rather than a union, of the bonds of love. Indeed, the heart of each was bound to the other; yet an impassable barrier existed between them. One word of Beatrice had broken the chain, as with the blow of an ax. To press with her hand that of her father's murderer: would it not make her an accomplice in the parricide? She felt this; and this she had signified in that brief instant to her lover.

Guido, struck with amazement, pretending certain business that called him elsewhere, remained but a short time longer, and striving to conceal his uneasiness, then took leave. Donna Louisa observing his confusion, and attributing it to one of these brief passing storms, which, while agitating, increase the flame of love, said jestingly:

"Beatrice! Beatrice! be not in so much haste to discard the king of hearts. Mind, that a card injudiciously discarded often loses the game."

Monsignore Guido had no sooner turned the corner of the street than he met one of his most faithful servants,

who was coming in great haste to seek him, and who, on meeting him, said :

“ Monsignore, the most Eminent Cardinal Maffeo has sent an attendant of the governor to your palace, urging upon him the necessity of finding you at once, to present to you this pair of spurs.”

“ Spurs ! And is there nothing else ? ”

“ Yes ; and he added that his eminence, having returned from the country, had found in the palace Monsignore Taverna waiting for him ; and after being closeted a long time with him, his eminence opened the door and gave these spurs to the attendant, with orders to take them immediately to Monsignore Guerra, after which he returned to his room.”

Guido remained for a moment in deep thought ; and then, as if a sudden light had burst upon him, exclaimed :

“ I understand.”

The family of the Cenci, having protracted somewhat painfully the evening, were now all silent. The children had been sent to bed, and a profound stillness reigned around, interrupted only by the faint rustling of the curtains, as they gently swayed in the evening breeze. Each one wished to retire, and yet no one had the courage to propose it ; when all at once a distant noise was heard . . . it increased . . . the trampling of many feet, mingled with the clang of arms, could be distinguished.

Don Giacomo rose in surprise and alarm, and went towards the door to ascertain the meaning of this noise. Scarcely had he reached the middle of the room, when the doors were burst violently open, and a platoon of policemen inundated not only the apartment where the family were assembled, but the whole house ; while some of them took their stations with drawn swords at the doors to prevent all escape.

"You are arrested by order of Monsignore Taverna," cried an insignificant little hunchback, who, with his hands on his hips, gave himself the airs of Sacripante.

"For what?" demanded Don Giacomo, in a voice that vainly affected security.

"You will know at the time and place of examination. Meanwhile, with your kind permission. . . ."

But this he said in mockery, for the words were barely out of his mouth when he began to search him from head to foot. Satisfied with the examination, he gruffly asked:

"Have you any arms about you? . . . confess it at once; it will be better for you."

"It seems to me your hands ought to be able to answer that question."

Others, at the same time, with equal diligence and greater alacrity, searched Lucretia and Bernardino, who submitted with tears in their eyes. One of these miserable wretches attempted to place his hand on Beatrice, but before he could succeed the girl dealt him a violent blow on the cheek. His companions roared with laughter, and one, to console him, said:

"The blows of women leave no scar."

"Bless us! how the cat scratches," replied the first, feigning merriment.

"Infamous wretches," said Beatrice, "have no right to lay hands on a Roman lady. I am ready to follow you wherever Monsignore Taverna orders; but keep at a distance from me."

At the same moment another officer presumed to search Donna Louisa, who regarded him very fiercely; but the sheriff admonished him:

"Cease, Piero; there is no order for her. . . ."

Meanwhile the children, awakened by the tumult, cried out loudly, the infant more than the others; these cries

of innocence and childhood inspired the soul with pity and sorrow. Donna Louisa hesitated an instant between her conjugal and maternal love, but, at length yielded to the strongest impulse of nature, and hastened to tranquilize her offspring and nurse the infant. A policeman raised his sword, and pointing it to her breast, cried out :

“You cannot pass.”

Donna Louisa looked fixedly in the eyes of the man, and thus addressed him :

“Thou canst not have received orders to hinder a mother from nursing her son. If, however, there be any priest, which I neither know nor believe, so dead to every affection of nature as to have given thee such orders, I would call him a villain to his face ; and thou, shouldst thou obey, would be a greater villain than he ; and I, if I paid any attention to them, the greatest of all. Make way, then, for a mother who goes to nurse her infant.” And resolutely thrusting aside the sword with her hand, she entered the room. The astonished policeman dared not stop her.

The officers having searched all the furniture and every corner of the house, and found nothing of consequence to take possession of, the sheriff ordered them to start.

“Whither do you conduct us ?” demanded all with one voice.

“You will see,” was the quick reply.

Donna Louisa, having performed the duties of the mother, returned to fulfill those of a wife. Restraining her own anguish on seeing the dejection of her husband, she encouraged and embraced him ; but the policeman who had before let her go, as if vexed at having been softened, threw himself betwixt the husband and wife, and repulsing the latter, rudely exclaimed :

"Be gone : we have not come here to see tears shed."

It is a matter well worthy of consideration that those who execute justice, whatever be the name they are known by, or the costume they wear, are usually calm and even courteous in their arrests of vulgar culprits, but in those of persons of rank and condition they exhibit a villainous complacency. The cause of this difference of treatment appears to me to be this. These contemptible fellows are never irritated against common rogues, because the latter are of the same stuff with themselves, and furnish material for their professional labors. The sculptor strikes and splits the marble ; the tailor cuts the cloth and sews it, but they hate neither the stone nor the wool ; they do it from love of the work, from which they hope to derive honor or profit. Policemen and villains very much resemble border inhabitants, who, from necessity or inclination, pass often from one country into the other to change their residence ; thus, the former find themselves policemen the instant they cease to be rogues ; and the latter become rogues, because it is not yet their turn to act as policemen ; and, between them both, every thing considered, there is no other alternative. They therefore understand each other much oftener and better than people suppose, and participate in many crimes and arrests with perfect good will and harmony ; they conform one to the other, as the echo to the voice, the knife to the sheath, the clerk to the priest. Besides, it would be altogether a useless task to mortify rogues, for all their sensibility lies in their personal strength. Indeed, all they say, when arrested, is, "Friend, do not bind me too hard !" It would be striking against a wall to attempt to excite in their breasts one sentiment of shame. On the contrary, when fortune puts one of these honest fellows in the policeman's hands, his heart expands with joy, and

he is at once recompensed for the long contempt he has endured; the serpent, instead of dirt, has found, at last, live flesh to bite, and can dart its venom into veins that feel. Look at past times, and thou wilt find lords worse than servants who have become masters, and these last are the very dregs of humanity, who pay for the mortifications they have endured in the coin of ferocity. The mud thinks it is honored when, trod by feet, it splashes on lordly garments. The rulers of the people strive hard to transform and disguise the ruffianly instruments of their power; to effect this they resort to every art, but always in vain. Lictors assimilate themselves to bailiffs, the bailiffs to constables, tipstiffs, servants, and other ancient and modern dunces, and most modern favorites of the police. Search among three hundred wolves for the best and perhaps thou wilt find him, but do not seek him among those, it would be lost time. Every power requires and maintains them, and endeavors to ennoble and raise them to heaven. It is the moral, not the material dress, that makes the man; take the worthiest soldier and make a constable of him, he will not elevate the trade of policeman; the trade will degrade him; this is true enough.

Alas! the soldier, the old soldier, changed into a constable! As for myself, I have ever esteemed and do still esteem the soldier, who endures the hardships of the rugged march, the extremities of cold and heat, and perils his life for his country, without a sure reward in the present, and with a very uncertain one in the future; despised, perhaps, and certainly unprovided for when the danger is over; as for myself, I say, I esteem such a soldier as a divinity. I would lavish upon him the fruits of the earth, which, thanks to his bravery, the foe could not gather; I would shelter him in the finest apartments of the city, the city that he defended; I would charm his

soul with the joys of affection and reverence ! . . . When I encounter some old soldier, disgraced by the police uniform, my heart is ready to burst with passion.

Such partiality for soldiers troubles you, free men ! But listen to one who speaks openly ; there is a most expeditious remedy of making them free also : make yourselves all soldiers, as the Swiss do now, and as once was done in the republics of the middle ages. I warn you, however, that for a while you will have to abandon your places of business, stop registering bills, discounting notes, postpone your inquiries as to the state of your crops and cattle, and, perhaps, (hardest sacrifice of all !) miss for an evening the ball and the theater. . . . Have you the courage to do this ? If you have, and if you feel the necessity of wearing mourning so long as the slavery of the country lasts, abolish standing armies ; for, besides their enormous expense, the arms placed in their hands, though sometimes used in defence of liberty, are too often converted into instruments of tyranny. Deprived of civic and military virtues, how can you presume to acquire liberty or preserve it when acquired ?

You would reap, yet do not sow ; you do not plant, yet would gather. Remember, too, if you would sow, there is a season for sowing and another for reaping ; that the fruits of autumn are not found in the spring, nor the flowers of spring in autumn : that, before gathering fruits, they must be left in the sun to ripen ; for, if gathered before their time, they become hurtful to him who eats them. I address you, who call yourselves friends of liberty, for I should not be understood by others, and, perhaps, will not be by you. You have imagined, and perhaps do still, that liberty can be secured with nails ; but in this way citizens are crucified, not made freemen. Liberty is not founded by force, nor is slavery : *vin ygar* is made by force.

I now return to the policemen : in respect to whom, when thou hast reflected a moment, thou wilt conclude that they very much resemble cats kept in a house to catch mice ; or if it please thee better, swallows, that, according to a French writer, besides consuming every year in France two hundred millions of pounds of grain, devour one hundred and thirty six billions and four hundred millions of insects.

God have mercy upon us ! Who could ever have believed there were so many insects in France ! Yet it is the fact. . . .

In the court yard, several carriages were drawn up, with the steps lowered ; the arrested entered, by the sinister light of dark lanterns, preceded, flanked and followed by a train of policemen ; they took seats, and started for their place of destination.

Guido saw the mournful cortége pass, and, urged by his passion, was on the point of appealing to the people, who had gathered round, to rescue the prisoners ; when his good servant, seizing him by the arm, exclaimed :

“ Monsignore, you will lose yourself, and not save them abstain, and you may be useful to them and yourself.”

Guido, striving to repress a groan, cried out :

“ Now we shall see where fortune leads them ;” and directed his steps towards his own house. Being arrived near it, he sent forward his servant to observe cautiously and ascertain if there were any people of the police in that quarter. Entering his apartment, he wrote a most piteous letter to his mother, in which he informed her of his impending misfortune, and the urgent necessity that existed to fly from justice, without loss of time ; that his letter must answer for an embrace and farewell ; that he hoped for better fortune ; that he would write again from

the place he should first reach; and that wherever he might be, or whatever might be his fate, she should occupy, next to his God, his thought and soul. Then, changing his dress, and taking as much money as he could conveniently carry, he went out by the private door of his palace, intending to gain the country: he had not proceeded far when he met a platoon of bailiffs on their way to his residence; they passed close to him, but failed to recognize him in his disguise. He, therefore, comprehended that his case was, really, a serious one; dismissed his servant, and with cautious steps approached the Porta Angelica; but he quickly retraced his steps on observing, from a distance, that the police, aided by soldiers, rigorously examined and searched every one passing through the gate to leave the city. He now wandered heedlessly through the streets of Rome, revolving expedients in his mind, without coming to any conclusion: whilst walking along, with eyes cast upon the ground, his attention was attracted by a light that suddenly flashed up from the underground vaults of a palace. Looking through the iron bars, he beheld around a table a group of coal bearers, who were passing their time drinking and gambling as their fathers did, and their children will do, all the efforts, not very laudable, of Father Mathew, the apostle of temperance, to the contrary, notwithstanding.

Certainly; *not very laudable*; and I will stand by what I say. Oh! philosophers; can you tell me why it is you always take from the people, and never think of giving to them? Malthus would deprive them of marriage; Father Mathew of ale; others of play. By degrees, they make supreme felicity to consist in total privation. Apicius, soon as he became a Jesuit, ceased to publish books on the culinary art, and prepared no more dinners for his friends; he practised the art alone, for his own

benefit, and with closed doors. Aristippus recited in a tub the essays of Zeno, after committing them to memory at a banquet. Go on, philosophers; I trust you will soon persuade the people to dispense with clothes, and cover themselves with fig leaves, as did our first parents. A gay life, oh, people! are these new fates spinning for thee! "to labor, to suffer, and to die." Sound trumpets, sing pæans to these vagrant benefactors of humanity! In truth, the tree of the people's happiness appears already so leafy, it must be lopped and trimmed of its superfluous branches. Noah, that great patriarch, whom all the world honors, and who conversed familiarly with the Creator, because he was once intoxicated, did he cut the vines? certainly not; he mixed his wine with water, and continued to drink; for wine cheers the heart of man. Lycurgus, a melancholy fool, cut the vines; but Bacchus, in revenge, so entwined his legs in the vine twigs that he cut them at the same time: and Bacchus was right.

Guido remembered the innkeeper at Ferrata, and recalling, in that anxious moment, the conventional words he had given him, descended at once into the cellar of the coal bearers. These fellows daily baptized the coal with many pitchers of water, not to purify it from the taint of original sin, but to increase its weight; a very honest method, practised even in our day; for a good thing when discovered should not soon be lost. Although Guido made his appearance, unarmed, among the coal bearers, they were as startled as was the shepherd at the appearance of Erminia; but he soon reassured them:

"Long live Saint Tebaldo, and those who honor him," cried Guido.

The coal bearers looked irresolutely at each other; but soon one of them, who liked Guido's countenance, replied:

"Long may he live ! But a coal bearer's labor is great, his wages small."

"Saint Nicholas protects the coal bearer, and his profits multiply."

"The coal bearer lives in the woods, and is surrounded by wolves."

"When the coal bearers shall ally themselves with the wolves, they will descend to the plains, and feed the herds in the place of the shepherds."

"Give me the sign."

"Here it is." This was three kisses ; one on the forehead, one on the mouth, and one on the breast.

"It is well. You are one of us, no doubt of that ; nevertheless, it seems to me strange you should be, for our fraternity is composed of all sorts of miserable people, united together by poverty and necessity for self defence, against the persecutions of rich and powerful men ; but, never mind, perhaps you also are suffering persecution ? What do you wish ? What assistance do you require ? But, come, follow me to a more retired spot."

Guido thought he must have misunderstood him, since he could perceive no opening in the vault leading to any other place ; but he was soon convinced of his error, when the coal bearer removed a heap of coals, and, raising a stone, opened a passage to a lower and more secret chamber. They descended by a ladder, and Guido heard the stone overhead replaced, and the coal heaped upon it. In this room were collected goods and silver articles of every description, and, as is the custom with this impiously profane class of people, a lamp was burning before an image of Saint Nicholas, the patron saint of robbers, and by them venerated as the enemy of the police. From time immemorial the coal bearers have been leagued with the banditti of the campagna, and also employed as their spies

in the city ; some of them practised both professions at one and the same time. They conveyed the stolen goods into Rome, and there melted the silver, which, by the aid of intermediate persons, was afterwards coined. Their merchandise was entrusted to friendly merchants at Civita Vecchia and Ancona, who forwarded it by sea to Naples, Venice, and the Levant. It often happened that a Venetian nobleman would find in the shop of a pawnbroker his cloak, that he had lost in the Roman campagna, and a Neapolitan baron be served at the inns of Verona and Padua with the table linen he had missed on the road to Terracina. Several members of this honest craft had become very rich ; so much so, that the public complained ; but the police knew not how to detect them, and they continued to enrich themselves with impunity, until at length they formed illustrious alliances for their children, and "occupied high positions in society." Those who, at first, had complained, were now silent, and when they chanced to meet this new class of nobility uncovered their heads, and called them "Excellencies." The ancient families publicly affected to despise them, but caressed them and borrowed their money in secret. Thus, in those remote times, progressed matters concerning society and the state. Now, things are managed differently.

Guido revealed to the new friend, whom fortune had thrown in his way, the peril to which he was exposed, and requested his advice and assistance. It was the custom of the coal bearers to go into the city twice during the week ; when one party entered with a load another departed for the country. The coal bearer, Guido's new friend, had arrived that same morning, and would be compelled to leave Rome in the afternoon or evening of the third day thereafter. Meanwhile, he admonished Guido in this wise :

"To-morrow, I will send some one of our companions out of the city to see what is going on. You will shave your beard and hair, and put on our most ragged clothes. We will dye your skin with certain herbs, and so smear you with coal, you will not know yourself. One of our companions is lame, and he will teach you to imitate his voice and gait. To-morrow, at daybreak, you will pass through the city with two asses, selling coal; if any one wants to buy, few words will suffice; for the sacks weigh two hundred pounds in all, and the price is fixed at half a scudo a sack. The people will mistake you for our lame companion, and in this way, I trust, with the aid of God, to conduct you to a place of safety."

Thus, among people of this class, deeds are more abundant than words; in short, with the help of the coal bearer, Guido was completely transformed in the manner suggested; and on the following morning, one of the handsomest young noblemen of Rome was seen in the disguise of a dirty coalman, wandering through the streets to sell coal, and carrying in his hand black bread and onions, which he pretended to eat. Now and then he gave the cry of "Coal! coal!" with the true accent, and limped to perfection. So well and so speedily does danger teach!

On the appointed day, the coal bearers left Rome unimpeded, accompanied by Guido. On the road they met a squadron of mounted police, returning from a scout in the campagna; and one of the former having asked the chief, as is customary among friends, what news there was, received for answer, "We went out to hunt a big bird, but he has flown, and now the devil himself can't catch him."

The carriages that conveyed the Cenci family stopped. That which held Beatrice was opened, and she was direct-

ed to step out. As she placed her foot on the ground she saw, by the crimson colored light of the lamps in the hands of the jailors and servants, that she was face to face with the marble Christ she had observed but a few hours previously above the door of the Prison of Corte Savella. Extending both her arms towards the image, she exclaimed, from the depths of her heart,

“ My God ! have mercy upon me ! ”

Bending her head, she entered the prison door the true gibbet of tears ! Turning her head, she saw that her friends were far in the rear, and between herself and them swayed to and fro a crowd of armed men. Like shipwrecked persons separated by the waves they exchanged mutual salutations with a heart-rending cry, that resounded from corridor to corridor, throughout the immense edifice.

Beatrice was compelled to pass through long halls, and to ascend and descend several flights of stairs ; at length, a door at the lower end of a vaulted chamber was opened and she was pushed within, the door being instantly closed upon her and locked and bolted. She found herself in darkness, in a damp and cold place, a veritable cavern. She did not stir ; she knew not which way to turn : certain stories she had heard of secret trap doors recurred to her mind, by means of which, in those less hypocritical but not less wicked days than the present, persons suddenly disappeared, either from dread of condemning them publicly, because innocent, or from apprehension of their too great power and influence. She was frightened, and remained immovable against the wall.

Suddenly, with the usual noise, the door was again opened and in rushed a number of ill favored individuals, bearing water and some coarse but necessary furniture. They proffered no consolation, and did not even speak ;

and left as they came, shutting and bolting furiously the door. Beatrice had observed where the bed was placed, and thither she now groped her way, and sat down on the edge, in the same attitude of the statue of Sculpture, which we admire in the tomb of the divine Buonarroti; and here she a while remained in quiet grief. It was not long, however, before Beatrice, exhausted, stretched herself at length on the bed, and closed her eyes; but in vain; sleep fled from her eyelids; her heart was oppressed with anxiety; she could only give vent to her sorrow in tears, and these flowed, drop by drop, like water filtered through a stone. To add to her sufferings, she heard throughout the night a mournful wailing, gradually growing fainter and fainter, of some one in deep distress; and it seemed to her she heard also prayers for the dying, as she did in fact, for in the cell adjacent to her own, that very night an unfortunate prisoner passed from time into eternity. A supreme malignity or stupidity of mind, without parallel on earth, characterized the police and discipline of the prison. In addition to her other troubles, the ears of Beatrice were constantly assailed by the perpetual striking of the hours: ten bronze bell clappers struck the half quarters, quarters, halves and entire hours, and the twelfth hour was announced by one hundred and sixty strokes; it was enough to drive her mad. When, some time afterwards, she asked the reason why the hours were sounded so frequently, she was calmly answered, that such were the orders of the superintendent, who, doubtless, had good grounds for what he did; and as to the noise, it was regarded by him as a useful auxiliary, since it overcame the nerves of the men. Nor did her torment end here; when, after a night of agony, her eyes began to close, towards dawn, three little bells rang out, and, almost at the same moment, with a

frightful sound, three hundred bolts of as many doors were withdrawn, accompanied by the horrible clanking of innumerable keys. Then arose the mournful murmurs of many discordant voices, singing the chants of the litany; these being finished, the three hundred doors were again shut, locked and bolted, and again clanked the innumerable keys. All this took place in utter darkness, which but increased the bewilderment of Beatrice. It was not long before she was frightened by a tumult overhead, and soon a ray of light entered the prison. Rising up and sitting on the bed side, half stupid and half terrified, she examined the place of her imprisonment. It was a cell, seven feet long by six wide, with a high arched ceiling terminating in a point: in the upper part was an opening, protected by strong iron bars, which, however, did not admit a view of the heavens, since a skylight intervened, which allowed ingress only to an uncertain light. In this slaughter house of human beings the noon of August appeared like an evening in December, and a December evening like the twilight hours of a day in the arctic regions. Beatrice now felt that there were two evils immeasurably great: hell in the future life, and the perversity of man in inventing torments for his fellow man in the present. Overcome, she bent down her head, reflecting on the destiny of this ferocious race that boasts of having been created in the image of God.

Unfortunate Beatrice! she had hardly begun to taste the cup of bitterness!

They brought her for breakfast some black bread, sour wine, and an execrable broth, filled with morsels of fat meat and vegetables. Again she strove to look the jailors in the face. Who can say to what species of animals these belonged?

Half an hour after the disappearance of these men, pre-

ceded by the usual commotion, a man, ill looking, but neatly dressed, entered the cell. He began by a vigorous inspection of the walls, the pavement, and the opening in the ceiling, and then gave a hasty glance at Beatrice ; the only one as yet who had bestowed upon her even a cold look of compassion. As he was about to leave the door of the cell, he was heard to utter these words :

"This prison cannot conscientiously be called healthy, and besides, it is dark. You will convey number one hundred and two to number nine, and supply it with the necessary furniture ; as to food, you will give her as much as she wishes, of course in moderation . . . do you understand ? If you transgress, two draws of the cord, and more if you deserve them . . . do you understand ?"

Thus even humanity assumed the features of ferocity and arrogance. Beatrice thought that this individual, who, she afterwards learned, was the superintendent, gave these orders in a loud voice, that they might reach her ears and afford her consolation ; she therefore commended him to God, as the only mode of testifying her gratitude.

In reply to the orders of the superintendent, a harsh voice responded,

"Yes, Excellency."

The transfer to cell number nine accordingly took place, and Beatrice found in her new abode a piece of white bread and a ray of pure sun. With these man can live, at least, until the ax or grief kills him.

Once it was the ax, because justice, ferociously earnest, took pleasure in brandishing the steel : now it is grief, for even justice, educated in the college of the Jesuits, becomes a hypocrite. In former times, with a blow on the head they extinguished both body and soul ; the present civilized age shrinks from the sight of blood, but does not hesitate to torment the soul. Once heads were cut

off; now hearts are broken. Let others decide which was most charitable; I have not experienced the ancient method, but I well know the modern one, and know also that delicately strung nerves are shocked at the sight of disheveled despair, and prefer to see it in public with the hair dressed and bound like that of a statue. Sufferings, afflictions, and crimes are varnished with the tint of decency. To suit the sensitive nerves of women, and above all those of men, it is necessary to weep systematically, roar harmoniously, and agonize artfully; every pang of the soul, every wound of the heart, must be classified and numbered. Everything takes place now-a-days with prodigious exactitude and equal propriety. The very prisons look elegant; architects exhaust their skill upon them. Oh! can it be, that within those superb and highly finished buildings, men who boast an immortal soul are killed by despair and suffering? . . . Gentlewomen visit them to satisfy bigoted devotion and pitiful vanity; they pass by like swallows, whistling some words of *philanthropy*; and then assert that the prisons are *superb* places, and ought to prove *enchanted* abodes to their occupants. And all around repeat "superb," "enchanted!" Woe to the wretch who would dare affirm that one might lead a less sad life than that of the prison; let him remember the fate of Orpheus! Meanwhile, the promoter of all this beauty, with his shoulders bent like the moon in its first quarter, enjoys the perfume of praise, and, full of humility amidst so much glory, places his hand on that part of the body where the heart is lodged, and exclaims, "Let us employ all our efforts . . . to alleviate . . . in proportion to their condition . . . the sufferings of prisoners . . . because, after all, they are men like ourselves . . . notwithstanding, the prison . . . and this must be considered

... cannot be made a paradise . . ." "And you, Signor Cavaliere," says a diplomatist, interrupting him, (for even in our day superintendents of prisons are knights,) "do your best, as becomes you. I assert this, because I have examined your *establishment* behind the scenes." The cavaliere, suspicious, regards the diplomatist with a squint, but the face of the latter remains as impenetrable as the sphynx, while the former, uncertain whether he was praised or mocked, continues doubtful. Oh, Hypocrisy ! Oh, great Mother Cybele of modern divinities !

"But what sort of narrative is this ? You go like the Muses : one step forward and two backward." Thus I hear my lady reader exclaim, and I reply, "Gentle damsel, or lady, if thou likest not this mode of conveyance, get thee down, for I shall not insist on thy making use of it. I write for those who do not dislike my digressions ; it was for this I exerted myself in youth and suffered in manhood. Surely I have served a cruel and ungrateful master, but he alone knows how to rectify himself, to weep and love ; and he is The People ! As for the others, they are not worth the serving."

For three days Beatrice was permitted to remain in peace, if peace it could be called. On the fourth day, towards morning, new faces presented themselves. These were two men dressed in black : one, who kept in the back ground, had a repulsive look ; the other seemed a compassionate man, if one might judge by his frequent sighing and clasping his hands together, as if in prayer. The latter, having made himself known as the prison physician, inquired of Beatrice particularly as to her health, eyed her attentively, felt her pulse, and then, congratulating her on her apparently good sanitary condition, offered her snuff, from a box the lid of which was ornamented with a beautiful miniature painting of the holy hear of Jesus ;

he exhorted her to take courage, as her miseries would soon be at an end; and added that she might dispose of him as she liked. He then departed, commending her to the Holy Mother of God.

"This man also appears to be well disposed;" exclaimed Beatrice, a little consoled.

"Although I perceived at a glance," said the physician in the corridor, to his companion, the criminal notary for such he was, "that it was unnecessary to examine her, yet I did so, thoroughly; because, you understand, humanity before all things and the soul"

"I understand . . . both soul and body . . . indeed? . . . and you are positive, eh? . . ."

"Yes; she is perfectly capable of enduring the torture."

"For form's sake, you will please, most excellent Signor Doctor, to draw up the usual *little certificate* to append to the process, and I will proceed with all the legal modes prescribed by *the vigilant regulations*."

"Willingly, most illustrious Signor Notary; these scruples do you honor: we must remember that our posterity will read this process, and it is most important they should see with what regularity and rigor we proceed in matters so sacred as the rights of humanity. . . ."

"And of justice, most excellent Doctor," added the Notary; "thank God, we do not live in barbarous times!"

Yet these men fancied themselves humane, and boasted of it. The notary, with the doctor's certificate in his hand, proceeded to the examination room.

This was an immense hall, and had once, perhaps, served as an oratory; at its farther end, upon a scaffolding of wood, was the judge's bench, covered with black cloth: the arm chairs too were lined with black: behind the president's seat on the wall, hung the image of Christ, sculptured in wood, the object of which, whether to con-

sole or frighten, it would be difficult to say, so ferocious had he been made to look by the savage artist.

As no one of the judges had as yet made his appearance, the honest notary, who was *order* personified, began to put everything in its proper place; he arranged the arm chairs symmetrically; laid on the table the certificate of the most humane doctor, and also the hour glass; prepared the candles and candlesticks, and placed in their midst a bronze Christ on which the accused and witnesses made oath. This Christ was sometimes red hot, and when offered, in this state, to those accused of heresy to kiss, would be let fall to the ground with fear, thus proving not only their abhorrence of the Redeemer, but his abhorrence of them. Nor did the methodical notary stop here; he also made ready the ink and paper; cut the pens, and held them up in the light to see if the points were equal, then inserted them, one after another, in a stand, like so many arrows, ready to be drawn, at any moment, against some Saint Sebastian, tied to the stake.

A little in front of the judge's bench, strong iron railings shut out the rest of the hall, and here was seen another man preparing the instruments of his profession; and this was Master Alexander, the famous executioner of Rome. Master Alexander was a robust and well proportioned man; not stout, but muscular as an athlete, with an olive, or rather bronze, complexion; his hair was black and curling; his shaggy eyebrows, lowering over the lids, made his eyes flash like fire amidst the stubble; his lips were thin and compressed, partly by nature, and partly from long, habitual silence; his brow was deeply wrinkled, yet we cannot say by years, for his age was a mystery. Altogether, his features expressed severity, not cruelty; a degenerated type, but still a Roman one.

We have paused to describe Master Alexander, and not without reason; for, in those times, the executioner was as much occupied as the prison superintendent is now.

In the hall were fixed several stakes, each with a cross bar, on the top of which were pulleys, furnished with small bronze wheels and ropes, destined to draw up weights; on the pavement near by were scattered pieces of lead, which were fastened to the feet to increase the weight; this was the torture of *the cord*: besides which, there were many other modest instruments of torture, all in readiness for immediate use. Master Alexander closely scrutinized them all, arranged them properly, and cleansed some of certain black spots, the remains of blood that had gushed from human veins. The notary and executioner then duly and solemnly prepared themselves to perform their judicial functions.

Meanwhile, another notary and two judges arrived; who, having bowed to all and each other, entered into conversation, and spoke of the weather, the season, their health, and their wives. Judge Cesare Luciani, a most brutal creature, with a head like a basket, and face of a green color, observed that the bracing air had increased his gout and cough; while the notary, Ribaldella, who looked upon him as his protector, in a doleful voice advised Luciani for God's sake to take care of his precious health. The judge replied:

"We will do so; we will do so, Giacomino;" we do not know, however, that he said this through wonder, or fear, or satisfaction that any living creature in the world cared one jot or tittle for him.

Another judge, (and this one was thought to be merciful,) so red faced that he looked like a pint of wine left through forgetfulness on the dinner table of Madame Justice, with round, fixed and stupid eyes, having stated

that he had been up all night, on account of one of his dogs being seized with colic, added :

"What could I do ? It was my own fault ; my heart is altogether too tender ; I was not born for a criminal judge."

And Ribaldella flatteringly rejoined :

"Illustrious sir, he who likes not dogs, dislikes Christians."

"Very true, Giacomino ; last night," continued Luciani, between his fits of coughing, "four murders and six robberies were committed. We are on the track of certain villains, and if we catch them, I assure you we shall make a famous business of it. These trials, thank God, increase every day, and you, my dear Giacomino, must make hay while the sun shines. The devil never ceases to cut wood for the judge who wishes to keep the kettle boiling."

"It seems impossible ! You know everything, are informed of everything ; I can't understand how you do it ! Eh ! Such indefatigable men as you are the world will not see again soon," observed the astute Ribaldella.

Luciani replied :

"It has been a passion with me from boyhood ; but you see I am paid for my curiosity by the gout."

"Do you take snuff ?" interrupted the order loving notary, who was named Bambigno Grifi, ostentatiously displaying a superb snuff box.

"Beautiful ! magnificent !" exclaimed all around, in a chorus. "This is perfectly new. How many have you ?"

"I want but a dozen to make up the three hundred and sixty-five, and then I shall stop. The most Eminent Cardinal Palotta, notwithstanding all his efforts, has only collected three hundred ; besides, his snuff boxes are very cheap, begging his pardon ; he buys them at the lowest prices, and regards only their shape ; but I, gentlemen,

only buy such as are historical, and have authentic vouchers of their celebrity. I possess one . . . but one, that I would not exchange for the clasp of his holiness's cloak : it belonged to the Emperor Charles 5th, while in the convent of San Giusto, and I obtained it from a monk of holy life of the order of Saint Jerome, who parted with it for the nose of Saint Serapion, a precious relic, which had been *for ages* in possession of the Grifi family. And this one, who, think you, made it ? No less a person than Benvenuto Cellini. . . ."

"Master Alexander, have you soaped the cord ?" asked the impatient Judge Luciani of the executioner, who replied in the affirmative.

"Observe," continued the notary Grifi, in ecstasies, "the wonderful skill and delicate workmanship. And to whom, think you, it has belonged ? To Monsignore Henry, Duke of Guise ; and I got it from a certain Franciscan monk, who administered to him at Blois the extreme unction, although he found him already dead. Now, I will tell you how I came into possession of such a precious treasure. . . ."

"The most illustrious Signor President !" shouted an usher, throwing open the door ; and all in silence turned towards the place where the new sun appeared.

Ulysses Moscati came forward with slow and serious steps. His solemn bearing was not due to affectation, but rather, notwithstanding his long practice in his disagreeable profession, to a repugnance which he invariably felt on approaching the judicial bench. He walked with his head cast down, and with eyes fixed upon the ground. In the loss of his wife and daughter his heart had suffered the severest treatment ; he was left alone upon the earth, and at an age when one most keenly feels the necessity of consolation. Under his icy exterior flowed bitter tears,

but finding no vent, they returned back to inundate his heart. By nature he was kind and compassionate, but domestic reasons had driven him into a career repugnant to him; though abhorring his profession, he had reached that period of life, when, the vigor of his soul being exhausted, habit had taken the place of will: he had not now the energy to resign this old habit, and, like most exhausted men, allowed himself to be borne along by the current of outward events. Hesitating in will, barren of affections, satiety made him alike tedious to himself and others: he felt immensely the necessity of tranquillity, but knew not where to find, or how to procure it. He had the reputation of being a learned jurist for the times in which he lived, and was so; since every where then, and especially in Rome, scholastic sophistry passed for science. In fact, superficial and servile learning was then most acceptable to the priests, and since, in the midst of universal ignorance, it was able to furnish an excuse for their grasping and unlimited cupidity, it answered every purpose, and was more valued by them, doubtless, than profounder acquirements would have been. The priests, therefore, in this universal darkness, kept but one lamp, with just sufficient light to illuminate their way: when then the new lights rose upon the world to shine on all men, they huddled together in great anxiety to extinguish it, using their own science as a scourge to beat to death that of others. Thus when the sun of the universe arose, that of Rome began to decline. Humanity moves eastward, Rome westward; and every step they take makes the dividing distance greater and irrevocable.

Bowing courteously to his colleagues and the subordinate officers, Moscati took his seat. The first thing that met his eyes was the doctor's certificate of the health of Beatrice; having twice read it over, he calmly said:

"It appears then, that, whenever it is requisite, we can conscientiously submit this unfortunate girl to torture."

"Certainly," answered Luciani, coughing, "... immediately. . . ."

"I doubt, however, whether we can legally apply it to her, as she is only fifteen years of age. On this point, gentlemen, I beg you will give me your deliberate opinion. . . ."

"As for myself," said Luciani, "I have no doubt at all. I will say, however, what I candidly and conscientiously think. If we look at the law, we shall find that age is no obstacle in cases of certain atrocity; and since parricide ranks with the most atrocious, we can safely omit, in this process, the rules adopted in ordinary trials. In fact, the law declares a woman mature at eleven years, and a man at fourteen; nor should the question of malice be determined by the number of years, nor by abstract presumption, but according to the facts proven. It was in this way those famous judges of the ancient Areopagus wisely sentenced to death the boy who stole the golden crown in the Temple of Minerva; and I think you will all, my colleagues, agree with me that this crime of parricide evinces a far greater depravity than that. If then we seek for precedents, numerous instances will occur to you to satisfy your minds that age is no obstacle; among which allow me to relate one that gave Sixtus 5th, a truly good pontiff, an admirable opportunity of saying golden words. Monsignore the Governor of Rome most respectfully reminded the pope that he could not condemn to death, as he desired, the young Florentine, found guilty of resisting the police in Trastevere, because he was not of the age prescribed by law. '*If he only wants years,*' replied the blessed Sixtus, '*let him die at once, for we will grant him ten of our own.*'"

Valentine Turchi, an associated judge, observed approvingly :

"And I may add that this was not an atrocious crime."

"A very just remark," replied old Luciani, feeling almost remorseful, because he had not made it himself.

Luciani, according to the justice of those times, was quite right. What is injustice to-day too often seems justice to-morrow ; besides, it varies in every place, and a man condemned in Florence might have been acquitted in Paris. Moscati, finding nothing worthy of further opposition, cast down his eyes and gave this order :

"Let the prisoner Beatrice Cenci be brought in."

She entered, surrounded by a number of policemen, and being ordered to look upon the judges, she failed to see the numerous instruments of torture in the hall. All present fixed their eyes attentively upon her, and, struck by her divine countenance, wondered how so much wickedness of soul could inhabit so lovely a form, coupled with such beautiful features. All wondered save two, who had the courage to believe her innocent, and these were President Moscati and the executioner Alexander.

The Notary Ribaldella at once commenced the interrogatories, to which she replied neither timidly nor boldly, but in a manner becoming one inspired with the dignity of innocence.

"Administer the oath," ordered Moscati.

And Ribaldella, holding the crucifix as if he were about to strike her on the head, rather than perform a solemn rite, said :

"Swear."

Beatrice, placing upon the crucifix her right hand, thus spoke :

"I swear upon this image of the Divine Redeemer, who was crucified for me, that I will speak the truth, because

I know I can speak it; if I could not, or would not, I should abstain from taking this oath."

"That is what justice expects from you. Beatrice Cenci," began Moscati, "you are accused, and we have sufficient proof of it, of having premeditated the death of your father, Count Francesco Cenci, in complicity with your stepmother and brothers. What do you answer?"

"It is not true."

And she pronounced these words with such ingenuous frankness that even Saint Thomas, had he heard her, would have been satisfied of her innocence. The Judge Luciani muttered between his teeth:

"It is not true, eh?"

"Prisoner! you are charged, and the process papers substantiate it, with having, in company with your aforesaid relatives, given Olimpio and Marzio, two brigands, orders to kill the Count Francesco Cenci, with the promise of a reward of eight thousand gold ducats, half of which sum was paid before and the other half after the consummation of the crime."

"It is not true."

"Now, now, we shall see if it is not true," muttered Luciani.

"You are accused, and we have abundant evidence of it, of having given, in addition to the money, as a present to the aforesaid Marzio, a scarlet mantle, laced with gold, which formerly belonged to the late Count Francesco Cenci."

"It is not so. My father gave that cloak to his valet, Marzio, before he left Rome for Rocca Petrella."

"You are accused, and the process furnishes sufficient proof, of having caused the murder of your father to be committed at Rocca Petrella on the 9th of September, 1598, and this by the express command of Lucretia Petroni, your stepmother, who postponed the commission

of the crime to that day, the 8th being first fixed upon, because on this last occurred the feast of the Most Holy Virgin. Further, that Olimpio and Marzio entered the chamber where Count Cenci was sleeping, he having previously been persuaded to drink wine drugged with opium, while you, in company with Lucretia Petroni, Giacomo, and Bernardino Cenci, waited in the antechamber for the completion of the crime. That, the assassins having returned horrified, you asked them what news there was, to which they replied, they had not courage enough to kill a sleeping man; that you then said to them, 'If you cannot kill my father asleep, how can you even look in his face when awake? Is this the conclusion you have arrived at after receiving four thousand ducats? Well, then, if you are such cowards, I will kill my father myself, and you shall not live long.' In consideration of which reproaches and threats the assassins reentered the chamber of the count, and one of them having placed a long iron spike over his eye, the other drove it into his head, and afterwards into his neck, thus consummating the murder of the said Count Cenci. That the brigands, having received the balance of the reward, went away, and you, with your brother and stepmother, dragged the corpse of your murdered father to an old balcony, from whence you cast it upon an alder tree. What do you answer?"

"I answer, that so many questions of such horrible import would be more properly addressed to a pack of wolves than to me. I repel them with all the force of my soul."

"You are accused, and the process proves it, of having consigned to Donna Laurenza Cortese, surnamed the Mancina, a sheet stained with blood to be washed; and you are also accused of having been privy to the murder

of Olimpio by the bandit Marzio, lest he should reveal the crime to justice. Answer."

"May I speak?"

"It is incumbent on you to speak, and to avow openly whatever may tend to enlighten justice, and defend yourself from these accusations."

"Gentlemen! It is quite superfluous for me to say that my whole education has been repugnant to such horrors; I will speak frankly the language of my heart and you will excuse my simplicity. I am barely sixteen years of age; I was brought up by my blessed mother, Donna Virginia Santa Croce, and Donna Lucretia Petroni, a lady distinguished for piety; neither my age, nor the precepts taught me by others, can lead any one to suspect me guilty of the atrocious crimes of which I am accused. Suppose nature had wished to make me a monster of iniquity, I beg you to reflect that an evil tendency or character can never so hide itself as not to be in part, at least, discovered. Now, as to my past life, you can readily ascertain its whole history by questioning my friends, relations, and the servants of the family. My life is a book of but few pages, open it, read, and attentively examine every part of it. Besides, if I am not mistaken, in order to judge equitably human deeds, it is essential to consider well the causes which may have promoted them. What, think you, could have induced me to commit such an enormous crime? Greediness of riches? Why, the greatest part of the Cenci property is entailed and inherited by the eldest son. As to the benefices, prebends, and such like offices pertaining to the family, they cannot be enjoyed by woman. I was quite ignorant that my late father had left, by his will, all the unentailed property of the family to convents and religious institutions; dying by a sudden and violent death, I supposed he had died in-

testate, and even in respect to this free property, I should have been, as a female, excluded by the law. My fortune is derived from my mother, and my father could not deprive me of it; I have heard that it amounted to about forty thousand scudi; you see, therefore, that avarice could not have tempted me. I do not deny, on the contrary, I admit that my father caused me many days of bitterness, and . . . but religion forbids children to turn their back upon the paternal tomb and curse it; I therefore abstain now from saying too many, and perhaps unworthy, words upon this subject; it is enough for me to ask, if wishing to be relieved from his long persecution and procure a more tranquil existence, I could have improved my condition by the crime of parricide, when, besides the dread of eternal damnation in the other life, I should have suffered all the terrible pangs of remorse and fear in this? Moreover, instances were not wanting in my family of petitions, which resulted favorably in securing protection from the paternal persecutions. Olimpia, my eldest sister, appealed to the Holy Father, and, by means of a humble memorial, was united in honorable marriage with Count Gabrielli of Agubbio; and, in fact, I did myself as she instructed me to do, and I wrote a supplication which I consigned to Marzio, begging him to take it to the office of petitions . . ."

"Do you know whether your petition was presented?"

"My judge, I begged Marzio to see that it was safely delivered."

"Why did you entrust Marzio with so important a commission?"

"Ah! my father kept me in close confinement, and, with the exception of Marzio, who alone was trusted by Count Cenci, I was not permitted to converse with any person."

“Continue.”

“Suppose nature had given me the ferocity, my father the motive, and the devil the occasion to commit the crime, tell me, can you imagine a more absurd mode of consuming it than that mentioned in the charge? Why make use of a weapon? With eight thousand ducats, poisons might easily have been procured, which destroy by degrees, like a consumptive fever, without leaving any trace or sign behind them for the researches of justice; but what do I say, that poisons might have been used? Why, I am accused not only of procuring, but administering them. Truly, if I gave my father wine drugged with opium to make him sleep for a whole night, I had only to increase the dose to make him sleep for ever. Why so many dangerous operations? Why have recourse to banditti? Why so many accomplices, who often turn traitors, and are always fatal? And, above all, what need was there for calling Bernardino, a boy twelve years of age, to participate in the conspiracy? How could he avail me, or rather, how could he do otherwise than obstruct me? Had a baby lived in the Cenci family, it would also have been suspected of complicity! All these suppositions appear absurd, as they are. Don Giacomo, at the time the fatal event took place, was in Rome, and he will prove this to you satisfactorily. As to the scarlet cloak, I have already said enough. What is said of the sheet may be true; I heard of it several times, and was told that the laundress had confessed it was delivered to her by a woman thirty years of age. Now, I am much younger than that, and it seems to me my appearance warrants the assertion. Oh, gentlemen! you are learned men, and experienced in these matters; you cannot, therefore, believe in such ridiculous inventions. What was the use of the spike and the hammer? Brigands al-

ways go armed with more pistols and daggers than they require; and can you suppose they came unarmed, when the object of their coming was to commit murder? And why should I have dragged the body to the balcony, when strong men were near me? Was it from necessity, then? Certainly not. The idea, under these circumstances, of a wife and daughter dragging off the corpse of a husband and father, is too absurd, and too contrary to nature to be indulged a moment. If you have a heart in your bosoms, and wisdom in your minds, you will not only cease tormenting my soul with such accusations, but beware of overpowering my very being with such terrible monstrosities."

All this Beatrice uttered uninterruptedly, and in a bewitching voice, and with a graceful manner. The judges, with bodies leaning forward and arms extended upon the desk, expressed in their features and attitudes profound admiration. Even the notary, Ribaldella, with his left hand on his papers, and his right hand raised, ceased writing. At length, Luciani, astonished, exclaimed :

"How soon one learns in the devil's school!"

"I admonish you," resumed the president Moscati, "to keep your promise to confess the truth, and observe the sanctity of the oath; for your accomplices have already acknowledged their crime, and ratified their confession under the proof of the torture. . . ."

"How! The pain of the torture, then, has forced them to condemn themselves, and become eternally infamous? Ah! torture does not verify the truth. . . ."

"Torture does not verify the truth?" interrupted Luciani, no longer capable of restraining himself; and half raising himself from his chair, he supported his trembling body by leaning both hands on its arms. Had the honor of his wife and daughter been calumniated, he could not

have been more ferociously angry. "Torture does not verify the truth—torture, which all jurisconsults, *nemine nemine discrepante*, proclaim the very queen of proof? Thou shalt soon see whether torture possesses the virtue of extorting the truth. . . ."

Beatrice continued :

"Donna Lucretia, who is somewhat advanced in years, delicately nurtured, of little courage, not foreseeing future evil, and eager to get rid of present trouble, may have been readily induced to confess what is false. As to the boy, Bernardino, it was not necessary to torment him. Some sweetmeats sufficed to elicit all you desired to know. Giacomo for a long time has been disgusted with life, and has even attempted suicide. Such are those whom you have tried by the torture, and you presume to have discovered the truth ! "

"These were not all your accomplices," added Moscati ;
"others also have confessed."

"Who ? "

"Marzio."

"Let Marzio be brought here to confront me, and see if he dare sustain his confession in my presence. Although I believe him capable of the most horrible things, if I do not hear him myself, I must refuse to credit such iniquity."

"Well, yourself, then. . . ."

"Alas ! "

This sounded like one of those sighs that break the heart which utters them. Beatrice then turned her eyes, and saw, what she had not perceived before, the ready instruments of torture, and she trembled from head to foot. At the base of a scaffold stood Marzio, or rather his ghost, reduced to skin and bones ; his glassy eyes alone gave sign of life. He looked as though he had come to breathe

his last. He strove to cast himself at the feet of Beatrice, but could not move a step, and fell prostrate with his face to the floor. Beatrice paused a moment, regarding him with contempt; but anger in that tender soul soon turned to pity, and she stretched forth her hands to help him to rise.

"Am I then, adorable lady," said Marzio, faintly, "still worthy of your pity? Oh, Signora Beatrice, have compassion on me, for God's sake, I am so miserable . . . miserable."

"Why, Marzio, did you accuse me? What have I done, that you should join the others in blasting my reputation?"

"Ah! I know too late the divine hand that chastens me; too late, that innocence alone can make us happy. I took another road, and have caused not only my own ruin, but that of others. I care not for myself, but those who are innocent . . . Oh! . . . I killed Olimpio lest he should injure you, and lo the result! But I swear by that God who will soon be my judge, that I never sought to harm you. Satiated with life, weighed down by infirmities, my heart stung by remorse, and exhausted by the torture, I heard not a syllable of what was read to me, nor knew what they made me assent to. I confessed every thing they desired, provided they would put a speedy end to my life: they were false to their promise, and converted my words into daggers to plunge into the heart of the innocent. . . ."

"Signor President," interrupted Luciani, "you have not assembled us here, I pray, to listen to a recital of the eulogies of Amaryllis and Melibeus."

"I fully concur in the appropriate observation of the most worthy auditor, Luciani," chimed in the judge, Valentino Turchi.

"Have patience, gentlemen," said Moscati, calmly, "and remember that we are not here for amusement. Since it is in our power to cut short one's speech with the ax, let us leave to the unfortunate the melancholy satisfaction of complaint and tears."

"They will have plenty of time to weep, when they return to prison. Had you taken the trouble, Signor President, to turn the hour glass, you would know that we have already spent two hours without coming to any conclusion. The government certainly does not pay us for wasting our time in such a manner . . . and if we go on at this rate, I shall ask permission to leave, that I may attend to more important matters."

"You may go, and may God accompany you. . . ."

The wretch, however, did not avail himself of the president's permission; but, on the contrary, sat down on his arm chair, more at ease than ever. Meanwhile, Moscati, turning towards Marzio, said,

"Accused! answer briefly: do you confirm or not your confession, in presence of this accused girl?"

"Signori judges! the harm you mean to do me will be serious but short. I know I am soon to appear before the tribunal of God, who requires neither testimony nor confessions. You can shorten the thread of my life, but not prolong it. Listen now to the truth, such as it is known to Him who will judge both you and me. I know these are my last hours, and God knows they are sad enough but it matters not blessed be they, for they afford me the opportunity of bearing witness to the innocence of this divine girl. Who Francesco Cenci was, many among you ought to know; since you have, perhaps, examined and condemned him several times for his enormous crimes. The saints of his calendar were crimes, each more atrocious than the other; his amusement consist-

ed in trampling on all law, human and divine ; in him nature seemed to have fixed the boundaries, beyond which the most audacious villainy dared not pass. Such was Cenci, and who, among you, is ignorant of it ? One day, this devil breathed upon me, and my heart was withered. You must know, judges, that I had married a girl of Vit-tana Annetta whom I, a poor orphan, adored next to the Holy Virgin ; and he snatched her from me, in all her beauty and freshness and then returned her to me, but transformed into a corpse with a dagger through the body. I attacked his castle, called, on account of the infamous deeds committed within its walls, '*Ribalda*,' and not finding him there burned his apartments, and set every thing on fire that I could reach. On those rocks are still to be seen vestiges of the flames. I abandoned the country, with an oath that I would steep my revenge in the blood of his family and of himself. I came to Rome, endeavored to procure service in his house, and succeeded. I also contrived to gain his favor. Whilst projecting the means of putting my purpose into execution, I learned the unutterable misery of his family. He hated his children as enemies, and prayed God and the saints that he might see them all die before himself. Go to the Church of Saint Thomas, and there you will see the tombs he ordered for his children ; go, and you will see by the side of one of them, a son what ? the tomb of a dog. One only creature he loved did I say loved ? I was wrong, yet know not how to express myself differently. I fear I have said too little, and yet I could not say more without covering my face with my hands . . . but I cannot raise my hands so high . . . because you have broken my arms by the torture. He loved, then, Beatrice. Confinement, starvation, blows, flatteries, abominable stratagems, every infamous means

did this old man resort to, to contaminate this angel of purity. It was then that compassion for this unhappy family, whom I had sworn to destroy, overcame my resolution, and I prevented the commission of more crimes in one day than your honors, perhaps, ever judged in a year. When Count Cenci received intelligence from Spain of the death of his two sons, Rocco and Cristofano, he had the audacity to give a grand banquet to his relatives and friends, when he so blasphemously spoke and acted, it seemed almost a miracle that Rome itself was not destroyed by the Divine vengeance : you may interrogate the guests, among whom were cardinals and barons. When all the guests, from disgust or horror, had deserted the hall, the count, more intoxicated with wickedness than wine, dared to lay his wicked hands on Beatrice. That would have been the last day of his life, had not the innocent girl screened and protected him from my uplifted hand. She implored me not to attempt her father's life ; but I would not relinquish my purpose, and decided to leave the house, in order to meet him elsewhere. The cunning old man, however, suspected me ; but, feigning confidence, sent me to Rocca Petrella to prepare his apartments. His apartments ! He had already dispatched assassins to waylay and kill me on the road, and meanwhile made me a present of his scarlet cloak, laced with gold, which I refused to accept as unbecoming my condition, but which he insisted on my taking and wearing as a protection on my journey against the *malaria* of the *campagna* : but his real object was to make the scarlet cloak a signal for the assassins, to mark unmistakably their victim. I saved myself from his snares, and turned them against himself. I assembled a band of my companions, and, while he thought I was dead, made him a prisoner in his last journey to Ribalda, and conveyed him to

the cavern of Tagliacozzo. He was to have been killed there, but he escaped. We drank of a certain wine drugged with opium, which the count had brought from Rome, and whilst stupefied by the wine, he was delivered from our hands, although the key of his prison was in my pocket. And, who, think you, was his liberator? This divine girl. Notwithstanding this, I did not renounce my bloody purpose; on the contrary, my revengeful determination grew stronger and stronger, and one night, having first carefully examined the locality, I, in company with two comrades, broke the iron bars of a window on the ground floor, and penetrated into the castle. One of my companions observed a shadow, some distance off, and hastened to follow it; it ascended the stairs, and entered a room, forgetting or neglecting to shut the door. That room was the prison in which Count Cenci confined his daughter Beatrice, in reward for having saved his life. . . . Shall I say what motive attracted thither this shadow, who was none other than the count himself? No . . . let your imaginations picture it! . . . My companion, who had continued to follow him, now rushed upon the count and killed him with a knife, less to satisfy my vengeance than to revenge outraged nature: and he did right: and whoever among you dares assert he would not himself have done the same, I declare him here, in the presence of Jesus Christ, a viler traitor than he who struck him in the face! It was we who dragged away his accursed body; we who threw him from the balcony on the alder tree. Signora Beatrice was awakened by the tumult in her room. The sheet was stained with the count's blood; but she neither saw it, nor gave it to the laundress, because she swooned away in her prison, and was taken from thence almost frantic. It was I who killed Olimpio; how and wherefore, I have already told you.

.... In Naples, I confessed whatever they wished, under the pains of torture this is the truth everything to the contrary is false Now, do with me as you please. I will conclude by thanking God, with all my soul, for granting me sufficient strength to say what was necessary in this matter" And with these words, he staggered, and would have fallen to the floor, had not Master Alexander hastened to assist him.

"Tell me, Signor President, is there no danger of her having bewitched him?" whispered Luciani, with a mysterious air, in Moscati's ear; and as the latter shrugged his shoulders, and made no reply, Luciani continued: "What, what you do not believe this it seems strange to you take care not to permit yourself to be dazzled by the false lights of the present day, which illuminate but one road, and that is the straight road to hell."

Luciani's insolent petulance very much annoyed Moscati, who, vexed to be thought wanting to his faith, witchcraft being in those days one of its dogmas, roused himself and resolutely demanded of Luciani:

"Why, Signor Auditor, do you doubt my belief in witchcraft? I wholly believe in it; but I do not see that it has anything to do with the case before us. The accused then persists in retracting?"

Marzio nodded assent.

"The final torture there is no remedy," observed the ever prompt Luciani; while Valentino Turchi echoed:

"There is no remedy; the final torture."

Moscati, drawing out his handkerchief, wiped the perspiration from his face, and turning to the notary, said:

"Notary, admonish the accused not to persist in his retraction warn him; otherwise, he must undergo the final torture, according to law explain this

torture to him fully and clearly and if he still persists, draw up the decree."

The worthy judge could not refrain from sobbing whilst delivering this address, the import of which the notary repeated to Marzio, informing him besides, that the final torture signified torments which generally ended in death. Marzio replied with a nod, for his swollen tongue prevented speech. The decree being drawn up, read and subscribed, the Notary Ribaldella, turning first to Luciani, who was attentively observing him, and then to the executioner, said to the latter :

"It is your turn, now."

Master Alexander seized Marzio's arms, placed them one over the other, behind his shoulders, and firmly bound them : after testing the cord, to see that it ran freely over the pulley, he took off his cap and said :

"Illustrious judges, in the severest way ?"

"The devil ! of course, the severest ;" growled Luciani, who could not restrain his impatience.

The others nodded their heads affirmatively.

Master Alexander, aided by an assistant, drew up Marzio slowly. Beatrice, lest she should see, inclined her head upon her breast ; but soon, driven by an irresistible impulse, raised her eyes. Horrible ! horrible ! With a loud scream she covered her face with both hands that mass of naked bones, in such a frightful attitude, had inspired terror and pity at the same moment. The executioner, after Marzio had been made to touch, with his arms stretched above his head, the cross bar of the stake, which was six feet above the floor, loosed the cord and let him fall. His fall was terrible his very bones were heard to crack. Marzio opened his bewildered eyes, while from his mouth fell drops of bloody foam. It was, indeed, a famous fall ; one of the best ever administered

by Master Alexander in the whole course of his life : it was difficult to say whether he was gratified or displeased with his performance, for he remained silent and motionless, waiting for further orders.

" Courage, Master Alexander, give him another . . . one of your best ; " cried out Luciani, half rising from his seat with excitement.

" It is not necessary, illustrious sir ; he has got his death blow."

" How ! how ? Is he dead ? " howled Luciani. " Why did you kill him ? How dared this fellow to die before retracting ? "

And as Master Alexander only shrugged his shoulders, and said nothing, the judge continued :

" Let us see, let us try if he be dead ; put some fire under his feet ; that will test it."

And he rose from his seat to help Alexander, but Moscati held him back by the arm, exclaiming, angrily :

" For God's sake, remember the dignity of your office ! Are you the judge, or the executioner ? "

But Luciani loosened his arm, and, impelled by his brutal impulse, advanced quickly towards Alexander, whose hand was resting on Marzio's breast, and anxiously inquired :

" Well ? "

" Illustrious sir, I have already told you ; he is dead."

Luciani then vented his rage on the corpse, by thus addressing it :

" Ah ! Thou rascal, thou hast then escaped me ? Thou hast cheated justice, and swindled Alexander out of his hanging-fee of fifty scudi ! " Then returning to his seat, he cried out to Moscati :

" Come, Signor President, let us strike the iron while it is hot ; let us take advantage of the girl's terror ; let us

hear what time she sings to the accompaniment of the cord." And his eyes flashed like a viper's on Beatrice.

"Enough," interrupted, energetically, the president, "it is I who direct the trial; the sitting is closed." And he started to go.

The notary, Grifi, as was his habit, stopped a while to clean the pens; and, having hastily replaced them in good order, ran after the judges, exclaiming:

"Now, I will finish my story, in relation to the Duke of Guise's snuff box. . . ."

Beatrice, pallid as marble, could hardly move; her lips were colorless, and her eyes wild and glassy from terror: summoning her courage and remaining strength to her aid, she approached Marzio's body, stopped before the corpse, gazed upon it fixedly, and thus apostrophized it:

"Miserable man! Thou couldst not save me; but I forgive thee, and pray God also to forgive thee. Thou hast sinned greatly; but hast loved and suffered more. Thou didst not live for virtue; but thou hast died for truth. I envy thee . . . for my life is such that I envy the dead. I cannot show thee my love (and thus saying, she gently closed his eyes, which were staring wide open) in any other way than by fulfilling this last duty, which I do with all my heart." Then turning towards the jailors, with a resolute countenance, she said: "Let us now return to the prison."

But her knees trembled, and at every step she stumbled, and was near falling to the ground; her pallid features and shivering limbs revealed the terrible emotion of her soul. Master Alexander, doffing his cap and keeping at a distance, thus respectfully addressed her:

"Signora, I know you cannot touch me; please God, I shall never touch you; but now you require some assistance, and, if you will allow me, I will call a person,

on whose arm you can bear without fear : she springs from an evil tree, and was born in prison ; yet she is a flower, fit to be presented to the Madonna she is my daughter."

He then gave a long whistle, and soon a girl appeared ; beautiful, it is true, but pale and hesitating. Poor thing ! she was conscious that she was born to misfortune.

" Virginia," said her father, " give thine arm to this lady she is as unfortunate as thou."

Beatrice, fixing her eyes upon the stranger's face, felt at once well disposed towards her ; and leaning affectionately upon her arm, moved in the direction of the prison.

Master Alexander purposely inflicted the horrible torture, that Marzio might die at once. Compassion, not hatred, prompted him to terminate, as speedily as possible, the sufferings of that miserable man. The consequence was, the executioner lost about thirty scudi, no small sum for a hangman, indeed, a large one ; much more than would be allowed him by the charitable bowels of a superintendent of humanitarian prisons, who, for thirty scudi and a little piece of silk dyed in the blood of Saint Stephen, would sell thirty Christs, with the Blessed Virgin to boot ; and if I exaggerate a single hair's breadth, may the devil take me, as I write.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE JUDGES.

"A new torture I must describe in verses.

* * * * *

For when strength of mind is added to ill will and power,
No remedy can be afforded by the people."

DANTE. "INFERNO."

MISFORTUNE is always foreshadowed by some presage or augury. Calm, collected minds foresee it by a thousand indications, as birds are conscious of an approaching storm; others, perpetually agitated by incessant vicissitudes, do not perceive it, and when it comes, are suddenly and unexpectedly overwhelmed.

In vain did the president Moscati close his ears to an inward voice, which constantly said to him, "Thou castest away thy labor." The voice ever returned to afflict him, and his mind became a prey to thoughts which, like specters, now hid and now revealed their frightful forms; nor did he dare interrogate them, lest they should more fully disclose themselves. However, heaving a long sigh, and supplicating heaven with a look, he directed his steps towards the palace of the Vatican. Having been announced, he waited patiently for two hours, when the pope's chamberlain came to inform him that he might enter; then, passing the door, he found himself in the presence of the supreme pontiff.

Concealed by a screen of green silk, which softened the

light of the candles, the face of Clement 8th was not distinguishable, nor could the two cardinals Aldobrandini, his nephews, who stood behind his chair, be seen. At this time the popes still represented the fingers of that same hand, which had for so many ages been extended over no small portion of the human race . . . if to bless it, God in his goodness will one day decide. In our own day, there is some difference among them; not so great, however, as to believe them born of a different family. Silent as to the others, we will only speak of the last, of Pius 9th, who exhibited great sympathy for the liberty of the people, and showed himself the most affectionate son of his venerable mother, Italy. In religious matters he was diligent, but not rigorously zealous, at least, in the beginning of his pontificate. Gregory 16th, on the contrary, only occupied himself in divinity, of which he was a famous master, caring somewhat less for the liberty and happiness of his dearly beloved children. The latter pope, to tighten the sweet bonds between the beloved children and loving father, called only one foreign army into Rome; the former, having the same object in view, called four, and two of these are still aiding him in making the Roman people bear that sweet yoke, his affection.

Clement wore the blood-colored velvet cape, trimmed with ermine, and the rochet of finest lace; his cowl was also of red velvet, and his gown, stockings, and shoes were of white silk, with the cross in gold embroidered thereon. The light of the candles, falling mainly on the nether parts of the servant of servants, brought into prominent relief one of his feet, majestically laid upon a crimson velvet cushion, adorned with gold fringe and tassels, as if to say to every one that approached, Kiss me. The judge, Moscati, was too good a Catholic not to hear

this voice, and falling heavily down—for he was old and infirm—his venerable white head struck against the leg of the pope, who, a martyr to the gout, was seized with acute pain; but, biting his lip, he disguised his suffering until he could say,

“Arise.”

The old man, supporting his trembling hand on the floor, and bending his knees with difficulty, contrived at length to rise to his feet. Having recovered his breath, he ingenuously expressed to the pope his opinion in relation to the trial of the Cenci family. He revealed the uncertainty of the evidence; exposed the improbability of the depositions; the tender age of some of the accused; the facts not merely discordant, but contradictory; and, in connection with some arguments of his own, repeated those urged by Beatrice. He even dared allude (a great audacity in those days!) to the doubtful character of testimony extorted by torture; for if Marzio had confessed under one trial by torture, he had also retracted that confession, and died under another; proof positive, in his opinion, that the brigand's last words were the truth. The Cencis, except the girl, had confessed a little and denied a little, declaring that they had accused themselves, because driven to it by excessive sufferings. He dwelt also on the marvelous sincerity of Beatrice; her effective eloquence and irresistible powers of persuasion; and expressed his conviction of her innocence. “He wished,” he said, “from a conscientious desire to discharge his duty, to make his holiness acquainted with these things, that he, in his infallibility, might decide what was best to be done in the premises. Further, that Bernardino, a lad twelve years of age, had been submitted to the cord, and this would ever be a cause of deep remorse and unspeak-

able grief. Beatrice had not yet been tried by the torture, for this seemed to him like committing a mortal sin."

Whilst Moscati was thus speaking, the two cardinals, who were in the background behind the pope's chair, exchanged quick and penetrating glances with each other; and the pontiff also raised his eyebrows several times; but, habitually skillful in dissimulation, he restrained himself, and, in a calmer tone of voice than usual, praised Moscati for his good intentions, and promised to take into careful consideration the matters brought to his notice, inviting him with affectionate phrase, to return the following morning, at the same hour. He then dismissed him with the apostolic benediction.

Moscati, notwithstanding these extraordinary demonstrations of good will, was experienced in "the wiles and guiles" of the court, and went away with his heart more than ever depressed. The inward monitor, more pertinacious than before, warned him that he had vainly wasted his time and labor. Educated in the school of experience, he well knew that with men in general, and especially with prelates, the more one promises, the less he performs; and that hopes planted in a court, either wither on the stem, or, like the poppy, lose their petals at the first gust of wind. Courts are like treacherous sea shores, whose proximity is never so dangerous to the mariner as when the sky is serene and the waves tranquil.

In spite of his presentiment, the honest man started the next morning for the Vatican, with a prayer to God that he might prosper his undertaking. He was received by the chamberlains with unusual respect, and informed that his Eminence Cardinal San Giorgio, nephew of his holiness, was expecting him in his apartments. Sad

omens always seemed to increase ; but what can man do against destiny ? Certainly, when all our efforts to obtain some good are exerted in vain, it is but small consolation to think we did all in our power to ensure success ; and yet this is the only one that is left us. Cardinal San Giorgio, long and intimately versed in state affairs, was famous for his skill in the cunning arts of courts. It is, therefore, needless to narrate that he received Moscati with exquisite kindness ; he invited him to sit down close by himself, and thus agreeably and politely opened the conversation :

“ I am glad, most illustrious Signor President, to be able to assure you that his holiness has received with great pleasure your wise comments respecting the trial of the Cencis ; they have not only convinced him of your excellent heart, but exquisite judgement, and if formerly his holiness entertained a high esteem for you, his affection and regard are now doubly increased : it is, however, the will of his holiness to examine this process himself, and with the seriousness it appears to deserve. His holiness dislikes the rigors, though salutary, of Pope Sixtus, but he detests at the same time, the exceeding Gregorian lenity : he sees with profoundest sorrow that evil plants—by reason of the want of diligence shown during the war with Ferrara—are sprouting, thicker and more malignant than ever, in the very bosom of his dominions : both his religion and duty towards God forbid this. However, it cannot be doubted, without offending the piety of the holy father, that the decisions which, in his supreme wisdom, he thought ought to have been adopted, were not such as to fulfill the requirements of justice.” Here, changing suddenly the subject of his speech, he said, in the kindest manner : “ The paternal heart of his holiness has been moved to compassion, in consideration of the re-

markable decline in health of so zealous and excellent a servant as yourself, most illustrious President: he has heard, with the deepest regret, that misfortune has visited your family, and desires, so far as mortal man can do, to alleviate your sorrows. I speak for him, by his authority: the holy father is fully satisfied with your zeal, illustrious President, but both charity and justice forbid him to permit any longer the sacrifice of yourself."

"Ah! there are griefs," replied Moscati, "which men cannot console, only exasperate. God alone can relieve them, and, perhaps, by the only remedy for all ills, death."

"I believe it; and, therefore, I wonder so much the more, that you, who are oppressed by great domestic affliction, should have the courage to attend to the duties of your office, which, from their laborious and naturally melancholy nature, would increase, rather than lessen your sorrows."

"True; but I persevere in my duties, because I have always believed, and do still, that there is no difference between a soldier and a magistrate, and that the latter should die on his bench, like the former on the battle field; as your eminence well knows, the Roman emperors, in consideration of the labors and devotion of magistrates, heaped praises on them more plentifully than on soldiers."

"What you esteem and so highly commend in a subject would be deemed cruel in a prince, who should never permit a faithful magistrate to wear himself out in labor, until he becomes a rotten stick, fit only for the fire: even the Romans, when they reached that period of life, called 'old age,' withdrew without infamy from public affairs. Towards evening, every animal on earth ceases to work."

"And I also, Eminence, would like to follow the universal habit ; not to rest, for there is time enough for that in the grave ; but to prepare myself, by meditation on serious things, for that end which is common to us all, and particularly desired by me : notwithstanding pagan examples, I should fear to be blamed. Jesus, the Redeemer, taught us, quite otherwise, the virtue of sacrifice ; but I, who feel myself incapable of such disinterestedness, would prefer to bear, without reproach, my white hairs to the tomb."

"Before all things, I advise you, dearest brother in Christ, to lend a willing ear to the summons from above : besides, I assure you, that instead of blame, you will receive praise, and from the holy father the fullest approbation ; in whose name I offer you all those favors you may think most appropriate to the final execution of your proposal."

"Since your eminence is so graciously pleased to console this wounded heart, I will reveal to you that I am called to dedicate myself wholly to God in some one of the religious orders, not less renowned for sanctity than for kindness and charity towards my brethren in tribulation."

"There are so many of such religious orders, my dear, in the holy Catholic Church, your only obstacle will be to choose. There are the monks of *San Giovanni di Dio*, consecrated to the care of poor invalids ; the *Augustins*, of the *Riscatto* ; the *Order of Preachers*, true athletes of Christ ; the *Franciscans*, who, with the *Dominicans*, were the supporters of the church in days of peril : but these orders, though suited to your zeal, are not exactly such as your studies and age require. The reverend *Benedictine Fathers* of Montecassino, consecrated to a contemplative life, became, by their virtues and

learning, famous among the most renowned orders of Christianity: and I would advise you to retire among them, did I not at least prefer the fathers of *the Company of Jesus*. . . .”

“The Jesuits?”

“The Jesuits. Who more than they deserve well of the church? Saints Francis and Dominic sustained the tottering church; the Jesuits reconstructed it. Who could have resisted more valiantly than they the Lutherans, Calvinists, Zwinglians, and all the other cursed, heretical abominations? To popes and kings the Jesuits are more essential than teeth are in a man’s mouth; without them one cannot chew: I know well what I say. Princes tried to humble the church; but the church, in just defence, crushed the princes. Now, that the people threaten both the throne and the altar, princes have grown wise and, uniting themselves in the bonds of love, endeavor to cure their reciprocal wounds. Popes and monarchs should be supported with equal earnestness, since both derive the divine right from God, the former directly, the latter indirectly. The Jesuits understand perfectly well their double mission, and they practise it with the wisdom of the serpent and harmlessness of the dove: they never doubt, never hesitate, never dishonestly discuss. Both obedience and faith triumphed over the world; for you must understand, illustrious President, that he who undertakes to investigate the dogmas of the church, or the edicts of kings, is either already a heretic or a rebel, or in a fair way of soon becoming so.”

“Eh! Yes . . . the Jesuits . . . I do not say: indeed, they are very deserving: but the Order of Saint Jerome, Eminence, what think you of that?”

“Holy Virgin! Do you wish, President, to select an imperial retreat? This does not seem to me humility:

tively, their fellows from afar ; and soon recognizing each other, form alliances for mutual protection. Oftentimes and with the deepest grief have I observed the powerful and innumerable brotherhood of the wicked. They seem to be irresistibly drawn together by a secret animal magnetism, a sort of breath, springing from the devil. When they declare war against thee, surrender thyself ; thou canst not contend against them : they are invisible, yet powerful ; impalpable, yet invincible. On the other hand, and with equal grief, I have beheld the indifference of the good towards each other ; possessing virtue and wisdom, they think these suffice to themselves, and make no effort for an offensive or defensive alliance. Oh ! ye wise men of the earth, open once your eyes and you will see that if right is the hilt, force is the blade of the sword. We read that in the East Indies swarms of ants sometimes attack the elephant, and speedily reduce him to such a plight that nothing is left but white, polished bones : what is done by the ants in the East Indies is done in Europe by the wicked, the envious, the ignorant, to the damage of the good and virtuous. True, the lion always goes alone, but in deserts, where he finds neither Jesuits, nor government committees, nor the big ants of India, nor royal tribunals, nor attorney generals.

Thus, the Cardinal San Giorgio, obliged, as he was, to choose a vile man from the wicked herd of magistrates, observed, in the distance, a vulture ready to pounce on the first carcase in its way—the Judge Luciani. Having summoned him to his presence, he received him with his usual treacherous caresses, and then informed him that his holiness, his most glorious uncle, never ceased speaking in the highest terms of his great learning, and especially of the readiness and salutary severity with which he expedited business ; he (the cardinal) also well knew that

Pope Sixtus 5th had a very exalted opinion of him, and before his death recommended him to the pope, his uncle, as a man eminently worthy of being employed in the most difficult emergencies : that it had been the intention of the pope, his uncle, to promote and reward him for his numerous merits, but until now he had been prevented from so doing by state affairs and the anxieties incident to the war. Meanwhile, to make up for lost time, his holiness wished, as a proof of his confidence, to entrust to his care the Cenci trial, which had been scandalously protracted, whilst, according to universal belief, the evidences of guilt were numerous and unimpeachable. He advised Luciani to proceed at once, to avoid all delay, and fulfill the expectations of the Roman people and the holy father : by such a course he would merit the appellation of restorer of justice

The cardinal, inflamed with the desire of accomplishing his object, had said more than was necessary. The eyes of the judge flashed like those of a wild beast before it springs upon its prey ; and his impetuous words struggled for utterance :

“Certainly, certainly, your eminence : with Signor Moscati nothing could be done ; his head was full of scruples full of fears indeed, I never knew where I should find myself. Think of it, your eminence ! I implored him in vain to submit Beatrice Cenci to the preparatory torture, whilst (may God deliver me from judging rashly) there was evidence enough to hang her (I beg pardon for this *lapsus linguæ*, as she is noble)—to behead her ten times.”

“Is it possible ?” exclaimed the cardinal, in wonder, and raising both hands.

“And when I intimated that she was bewitched—struck as I was at her clearness of mind, and ready

speech, which are not at all natural to an ingenuous girl—he looked as though I had uttered a great heresy. Your Eminence well knows that the devil generally bestows the gift of eloquence on those into whose bodies he enters.”

On the contrary, his eminence knew, from the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that the gift of tongues comes from the Holy Ghost; and that when the Apostles went forth, on the day of Pentecost, speaking unknown languages, the people thought them drunk with wine. However, the cardinal, deeming it unprofitable to contradict the judge, pressed his lips and bent his head approvingly.

“You may rely on me,” continued Luciani, “I am used to quick and thorough work. When Pope Sixtus sent me to Bologna, on business relating to the Pepoli affair, I had the honor to place the count in the hands of his holiness in less than a week. . . .”

“Ah! He was beheaded in '86. . . .”

“I beg pardon, your Eminence, it was in '85, on the Friday following the festival of *Corpus Domini*, in the first year of his pontificate. That blessed count was immensely rich, and had powerful relations and numerous partisans; and, when Justice seized him, no one would witness against him, and he was even on the point of being acquitted, when his Holiness Sixtus 5th despatched me immediately by post to Bologna, to intimate to the illustrious judges that, if they did not speedily condemn to the gibbet Count Giovanni, he would order them to be hanged. So, reduced to the alternative of hanging or being hanged, they hanged; and they did right; not, however, without some damage to their reputation for too long delay: for what is law in a well directed government? Nothing else than the rule of conduct for sub-

jects. Now, who makes the law ? The Prince : his will, therefore, is law : to write and publish it, is only a formality ; and Pope Sixtus, who knew how to govern, not only insisted on that law which was written, but on whatever he chose to express by his voice, or by a nod."

" Ah ! Pope Sixtus understood how ! "

" The petitions sent to that excellent pope in favor of the count numbered more than five hundred : he listened only to one of them, which was from the count himself, who implored the privilege of his rank, and respectfully requested to be beheaded, instead of hanged. Sixtus, with his usual benevolence, not only granted the petition, but, of his own free will, conferred the distinguished honor of permitting the count to wear his sword on his way to the scaffold. However," continued Luciani, hesitating, " I do not comprehend how Pope Sixtus deigned to remember me in his last hours, for he had taken such an aversion to me that I came near losing my neck ; and God knows that I served him with my whole heart. But he was truly a great pontiff, though when his temper was once fully roused, it was impossible to soothe him."

His Eminence, who had told a downright falsehood, was not a man to be easily abashed : he, therefore, readily replied :

" Certainly : but as Pope Sixtus, after his first fit of rage, became calm, so we must believe that, conscious of the fault he had committed without remedying it during his life, he endeavored to do so in the hour of death." Then, desirous of distracting the attention of Luciani, the cardinal asked : " How did it happen, illustrious President, that you fell into disgrace with such a pope ? "

" You must know, Eminence, that Pope Sixtus, being somewhat wearied of seeing always common people condemned to die, was seized with the caprice of seeing some

prince conducted to the scaffold. He was so much occupied with this idea, that sometimes, as he listened for his amusement to the history of the imprisonment and death of Queen Mary Stuart, he would sigh and say: 'Oh, God! when will that day come, when I also shall enjoy such an opportunity?' And another time, going up to the window and turning his face towards the west, where he thought England was situated, he cried out, as if addressing Queen Elizabeth: 'Happy Queen! to whom Heaven granted the honor of sending to the scaffold a crowned head!' Whilst longing for such an opportunity, fortune presented him with one in the person of Monsignore Farnese, son of his Serene Highness the Duke of Parma. This young prince, in disobedience of the pope's orders, was bold enough to carry arms on his person in the streets of Rome, and even went with them to the Vatican, and into the presence of the pontiff himself. Sixtus secretly ordered the sheriff and police to be ready in the antechamber, and seize the prince as he came out, and conduct him at once to the Castle of Sant. Angelo. The law was explicit, the crime indubitable, and aggravated by the circumstances and sanctity of the locality. So soon as the arrest took place there was great excitement, not only in Rome, but the adjacent countries; and it was thought the prince would most certainly be pardoned, in consideration of his youth, and the power and reputation of his illustrious family, and their alliance with the mightiest princes in Christendom: but those who knew the pope well shook their heads and said: 'He's a hard bone to gnaw!' Nor did these deceive themselves. In fact, Pope Sixtus on this occasion showed himself obstinate rather than rigorous; and to those who urged in extenuation the merits of the Duke, Alexander Farnese, he replied:

" 'Nobody appreciates them better than I; but the vir-

tues of the father neither ought nor can excuse the faults of the son.'

"To other jurists, who urged that princes and lawyers were not subject to the statute, he replied that Monsignore Farnese, being a vassal of Holy Mother Church, was strictly amenable to the law ; and, finally, to those who warmly represented, in palliation of his offense, the youth of the prisoner, he retorted by saying, that his early age was, in fact, an aggravating circumstance, since, if he was so bold in youth, he might be desperate and dangerous in manhood. Cardinal Farnese, a man of great prudence, having made all his preparations with sagacity and secrecy, went after sunset to make his holiness a visit. Arrived in the presence of the pope, he began to supplicate him in the most piteous manner, begging him not to disgrace the Farnese family, nor sadden for ever the heart of that most valiant champion of the church, the Duke Alexander. The pope heard all he had to say, but wishing to get rid of the annoyance, he took a piece of paper and wrote on it an order to the commandant of the castle, to consign the prisoner at two o'clock the next morning to Cardinal Farnese ; at the same time he wrote another order to the same officer to have Monsignore Farnese put to death at once, without a moment's delay. What seems almost incredible is that Cardinal Farnese, suspecting wrong, went at once to the castle and bribed the keeper of the clock to move forward the hands, so that two o'clock came very speedily, and the cardinal presenting the order, received the prisoner, his nephew, who, stepping into a carriage hastily, left Rome and safely arrived in his States in Lombardy, in less than thirty hours. I will now tell your Eminence what snares this blessed cardinal laid for me. It was to me Pope Sixtus handed the second order, and in his eagerness, as he did so, gave me a push, as

though he would have hurled me at once into the castle. Whilst passing the bridge, the horses stumbled and fell against a rope thrown across, and the carriage was upset. This accident, or rather the unavoidable delay consequent upon it, proved fatal. I hastened on foot as well as I could ; looked at my watch, and found it wanted but a few minutes to half past one ; hurrying on, I at last found myself in presence of the commandant, and placed in his hands the pope's written order : he took it, read it and then fixed on me his eyes, as bewildered as if he had lost his reason. I asked what was the matter, and he answered by asking, what time I thought it was : I replied, it was about half past one. ' That hour will not return till to-morrow ; it is now three o'clock,' said he. ' Three ? ' ' Three o'clock.' I took my watch from my pocket, it wanted five minutes to two, and I put it under his eye. At this moment the castle clock struck three. The trick of the cunning cardinal was now apparent enough ; he had deceived us all and me more than the others. When the Holy Father was informed of all this he was not angry, as I supposed he would be, with Cardinal Farnese. On the contrary, the next time he saw him he congratulated him on his craftiness and diligence : but when I threw myself at his feet to implore his pardon, he would not listen to me ; but regarding me sternly, his lips trembling with rage, he said : ' Begone from my presence, and thank God I do not send you at once to the gallows.' I did not wait for him to say it twice ; but I leave it to your Eminence if I deserved such a reproof."

" Console yourself, now, Signor President ; you see the prize is always won at last by those who deserve it, and who know how to wait for it . . . Go, then, and end the business which, in the name of his Holiness, I confide to your care and discretion."

The President Luciani, bowing as far as the pavement, renewed his alliance with the dust and took leave. On his way home, he trembled through all his limbs; the coward trembled, but with joy; joy that he was going to torment his fellow beings, the creatures of God. Let it not be supposed that this ferocious soul was uninfluenced by the hope of gain, or prospect of promotion, far from it; yet his cruelty surpassed his avarice.

On arriving home, he appeared more cheerful than usual, spoke pleasantly to his wife, caressed his daughters; then asked for supper, and celebrated his promotion by drinking immoderately. Becoming more gay and impudent over his wine, he exclaimed:

"Come here, my daughters, I have some good news for you. Before the end of the week, I hope to make you a magnificent present."

"And what are you going to give us, father?" asked the eldest.

"You must divine."

"A silk gown?"

"Far better than that."

"An excursion to Tivoli?"

"Still better. I will give you the heads of four Romans, who shall be beheaded; and to one of these heads is attached a neck, white and round like yours."

And thus saying, he placed his hands around her neck. The girl shrunk back, exclaiming:

"These are presents for executioners: I do not want such."

And the other sisters repeated what she said:

"An ugly present, a frightful present; we will not have it."

"Woman," cried Luciani, looking angrily at his wife, "our daughters speak like the mother." And with these

words, he rose, drew on his cap, and taking a light, withdrew to his room, where he locked himself in.

The following morning, at day break, Luciani was seen at the prison of Corte Savella, accompanied by two old women, or rather by two furies, directing his steps towards the cell occupied by Beatrice.

The afflicted girl was lying down, absorbed in a multitude of thoughts, all of which came to mournful conclusions. Satiated with life, or rather her experience of it, she incessantly implored the Almighty to deliver her from this world of sin and sorrow, and take her to himself. Suddenly, the door of her cell was thrust violently open, and she beheld the hideous faces of Luciani and his two female companions.

In brief and harsh language, the president announced to her that he was come to examine if any mark of witchcraft could be found on her person, and that she must submit peaceably to the examination. Meanwhile, he retired to a corner of the cell, and here, with his face turned to the wall, he directed the hags to perform their duty.

Beatrice, trembling with rage and shame, wrapped herself in the coverlets, and drawing them tightly around her limbs, refused to submit to such a humiliating search. The cruel, bigoted women, however, would not relent; but with their crooked, bony hands tore away the coverlets and sheets. That angel of love, in her nakedness, was now in their ruthless power.

"The scurf comes on the head," cried Luciani from his corner, "begin, therefore, by examining the head: look carefully through the hair and examine diligently the skin. . . . You, Signora Dorothy, clean your spectacles. . . . I repeat it for the twentieth time . . . have you found?"

"I find nothing," replied Dorothy, "but a quantity of hair, enough to make a wig for both of us. . . ."

"Enough for all three of us," observed the other.

"Look lower down look at her neck, breast, and shoulders. . . ."

"Nothing. . . ."

"Nothing? It is impossible!"

"It is true. It would be easier for a buffalo to pass unobserved over the snow, than for a hair to escape detection on this milk-white skin."

In this manner, Beatrice was examined throughout her entire person, without the discovery of any mark.

"In fact," again began Luciani, "those experienced in the art, teach that the devil generally stamps his mark either on the bosom, or on the left leg; however, as his power is not limited by law, turn her over on her breast and examine diligently her shoulders."

"Here it is we find"

"What? Eh?" demanded, impatiently, Luciani, who with difficulty remained in his place.

"We find on her waist a mole, surrounded by some down of a gold color."

"Well! . . . Very well! Though the masters of the art tell us that the mark must be either livid or black, we may observe that, as the devil despises every law, he can never submit to an invariable rule. Signora Dorothy, take your instrument and first plunge it into the holy water."

The hag, taking a long iron pin, plunged it into the vase, muttering, at the same time, some sort of prayer. Luciani, boiling over with impatience, asked:

"Have you done?"

"Yes, illustrious sir."

"Courage, then; thrust it gently into the infernal mark."

Beatrice wept in anger at such degradation, and defended herself fiercely from the assault of the women. But they triumphed, and the iron penetrated her flesh.

"Holy Virgin!" cried Dorothy, still grasping the instrument, "we do not wish to do you any harm, dear sister; it is all for your good and the salvation of your soul."

Meanwhile, Luciani, without once turning his head, was muttering in the corner, one of the innumerable prayers, beginning, "*In nomine Patris, Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*," and ending, "*Per omnia sæcula sæculorum, Amen*." He then ordered the Spirit of Darkness to leave the body of Beatrice Cenci forthwith. Having finished, he exclaimed :

"Thank God, I feel now content, I may almost say secure; for either the devil was there, or was not there : if he was there, he is now, by virtue of the exorcism, fast returning to hell : if he was not there, he will not dare enter now."

Recalling the two old women, without even bestowing a glance on the poor forsaken girl, he left the prison, conversing with his companions on the power of the devil. Then giving each one a scudo, he begged them to offer up their prayers to San Gaetano for his success in the important office committed to his keeping, to the utter confusion of the wicked and the greater exaltation of Holy Mother Church. The two bigots complied with his request, went immediately to the Jesuit church, and prayed San Gaetano that he would deign to grant to his beloved brother in Christ, the President Luciani, the favor of sending legally to the scaffold the whole Cenci family, without exception.

Whilst waiting, however, for Divine assistance, the good Luciani did not remain idle, for early the ensuing morning, he found himself, with the other judges, at the Prison of

Corte Savella, and without delay ordered Beatrice to be conducted into their presence.

The place, become vacant by the promotion of Luciani, had been bestowed on a certain stupid individual, who was neither good nor bad as a man, but iniquitous as a judge; for the only trouble he took in his judicial duties was to receive his pay; and he was wholly wanting in independence, for his mind and prejudices always inclined towards the views and wishes of his superiors. Shameful compound of cowardice, ignorance, and sloth, too common among *employés* of every sort, but especially among those calling themselves *ministers of justice*!

Beatrice was now in presence of Luciani. That was an atrociously barbarous spectacle which the Roman circus exhibited, when wild beasts and men fought against themselves and each other: yet the means of defence were often equal; and we sometimes read that despair overcame ferocious strength, and that the condemned gladiator, thrusting his naked arm into the lion's throat, stifled the huge beast. But it was a far more cruel and humiliating spectacle to see a tender girl, fettered with chains, exposed to a rage as savage, but more cunning, than that of the lion, to the rage of a man who called himself judge, who attacked her, with terror for his weapon, surrounded by an imposing force, and accompanied by torments, which even the devil himself could never have extracted from the cord, steel, and fire.

"Accused!" began Luciani, with a rude frown, which he fancied solemn, "you have before heard the indictments with which you are charged: do you wish to hear them again?"

"It is not necessary: once heard, they are not easily forgotten"

"Especially when we have committed them I now

inform you that, by the confession of your accomplices, you have been fully convicted, and justice, rigorously speaking, might well dispense with reading them again to you."

"Then, why are you so insolent as to ask me the question?"

"I ask it for the salvation of your soul; because, both as a Christian and a Catholic, though an unworthy one, you should know that death without confession is eternal perdition."

"How can you, who should think of your own soul, find leisure to trouble yourself about mine? Let every one provide, as best he can, for his own soul! These are matters between God and his creatures, and you have nothing to do with them. If you are satisfied of my guilt, condemn me at once, and have done with it."

"Accused! be wise, and consider that arrogance towards your judges can only make your situation more serious; and as to myself, it can have no effect, for, besides having exorcised you according to custom, I possess a very efficacious remedy against witchcraft and incantations, in case you are able to use them against me. For the second time, I now ask you, will you confess or not?"

"That which I did confess was the truth; as to confessing a falsehood, with the help of God, in whom is my trust, neither your torments nor your injustice shall force it from me."

"That is precisely what we are going to test. Meanwhile, I would have you know that I have managed worse heads than yours. Notary Ribaldella, write: 'In the Most Holy Name of God. Amen. We decree, &c., before passing to the final torture, that Beatrice Cenci be submitted to *the vigil*, or to be kept awake for forty hours, instead of the torture of *the question*, &c., and we hereby

appoint the Notary Giacomo Ribaldella to assist at the aforesaid *vigil* during the first four hours; the Notary Bertino Grifi, during the second four hours; the Notary Sandrello Bambagino, during the third four hours; and thus in turn, each one successively, until the said forty hours shall be exhausted, or until the confession of the culprit shall take place.' Sign"

Having signed the decree, the President Luciani ordered it to be presented to the two associate judges, who, without a moment's hesitancy—such was the influence of their superior—likewise affixed their signatures.

The torture of the vigil consisted in a joint stool three feet high, the seat of which was about a hand's breath in width, and culminated to a point like a diamond; the back had the same size and form. I shall not prolong my narrative by describing how they compelled the miserable girl to sit there; how they tied her legs to keep them from the floor; or how, by means of a cord and pulley fastened to the ceiling, they drew up her arms and bound them behind her. My pen shrinks from horror, to record that policemen watched by her side, and, from time to time, pushed her to and fro, that either she might swing on the sharp pointed seat, or strike against the agonizing back; that Master Alexander, the executioner, agreeably to the orders he had received, raised her twice every hour by the cord, and then let her fall suddenly on the torturing seat. Alexander had feeling, though an executioner, yet so many were the eyes fixed upon him, he dared in no degree relent in the application of this dreadful torture. I shall not repeat the shameless railleries and the infamous allusions prodigally lavished on the chaste girl by these wild beasts with human faces, and especially by the Notary Ribaldella, who reflected, like a mirror, the savage mind of Luciani. I shall not relate that the

President Luciani often made his appearance, even in the latest hours of the night; and was so exasperated at the divine constancy of Beatrice, that he frequently exclaimed, grinding his teeth: 'Draw her up higher! Let her fall more violently!' I will not tell of her burning tears, her cold sweat, her unspeakable agonies, her many swoons; nor speak of the cruel pity of her tormentors when they recalled her to a sense of suffering by means of stimulants: no; these things, which the vicars of Christ allowed, and not only allowed, but promoted and encouraged, my pen now shrinks to record; the very ink, in tracing them, would turn red through shame. But I will relate the marvelous courage and fortitude of the illustrious girl, who, throughout her long agony, remained firm and resolute in her determination to die in the midst of torments, rather than blast her fair fame by the confession of a crime she had never committed. They led her away from the vigil, more dead than alive, and conducting her to her cell, laid her on the bed.

For two days she was left undisturbed: her mind having recovered somewhat its vigor, she remembered keenly the pangs already endured; while the far more bitter agonies she would soon have to suffer presented themselves to her imagination, and inspired her with fearful forebodings: yet was her heart as firm as ever, and she resolved never to yield, but, if possible, to die in silence.

On the third day, by order of the President Luciani, the bailiffs came again to convey her to fresh tortures. Resigned to her fate, she did not hesitate to proceed, and quietly requested as a favor that she might be permitted to dress herself: permission was given, but accompanied by the rude order to make haste, as the judges were already assembled, and it hardly became them to wait for

a prisoner. Whilst dressing, assisted by the executioner's daughter, Beatrice thus spoke :

"You know, my sister, that they want to torture me ; and I fear I shall die under it, as did that unfortunate Marzio. I cannot recompense you for your charity, dear Virginia, but I leave you a souvenir ; you shall have all my linen and gowns . . . and hold . . . this little cross also, which belonged to my mother . . . under condition . . . that, if I return alive from the torture, you return it to me. . . . Moreover . . . listen to me . . . Virginia . . . (and here she blushed to the very temples) . . . you must know I have . . . no . . . I had an ardent lover, handsome and good : I loved him . . . and he me, and I believe he still loves me . . . but we shall never be united on earth ! . . . You will take this image and endeavor to be admitted to the presence of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, and tell him I sent it to him for his friend, and that I wish he would, at the same time, let his friend know that I often prayed God before it for the salvation of his soul : be careful not to forget it, and you might add. . . ."

"Halloo, there! . . . do you fancy you are going to a ball ? . . . We have waited an hour, already. . . . Come along, just as you are."

Beatrice obeyed. Virginia, interrupted by the jailors, and oppressed with grief, could not utter a word, but accompanied Beatrice to the door, and, having embraced and kissed her, bade her adieu.

The President Luciani, with both arms stretched along the desk, looking like a recumbent mastiff, was at that moment thus conversing with his honorable colleagues.

"It seems impossible ! Had I not caused her to be examined rigorously, almost under my own eyes, I may

say, though, *honestatis causa*, I kept my face to the wall, I should have been certain of her being a wizard."

"However," gravely observed Valentino Turchi, with an ostentatious humility that betrayed his presumption, "however, I take the liberty to observe that her hair was not clipped. . . ."

Luciani, turning suddenly his head, like a mastiff when stung by a gnat, towards Turchi, harshly replied :

"I did not order the hair to be clipped, because Del Rio, Bodino, and others among the most renowned writers on infernal subjects, do not precisely indicate the hairy part as that where the devil generally exercises his power."

"Perhaps not, generally ;" answered Turchi ; "but, it having several times occurred to me that God placed the enormous strength of Samson in his hair, I concluded that, perhaps the devil might also have chosen it as the seat of his most perfidious incantations."

"Your opinion," replied Luciani, "is certainly not void of foundation, and. . . ."

Here the notary Ribaldella, who was but an echo of his patron's soul, wrote a word on a piece of paper, which he humbly presented to him, as he was about finishing his speech. Luciani read it, and his eyes flashed with ferocity and pride. Turning to Turchi, he continued : "and your proposal would be entertained, did it not prevent the application of the torture *capillorum*, to which she is to be subjected this morning ; and you have too much experience in criminal cases not to know that this mode of torture is always highly efficacious '

Ribaldella had written on the paper :

"And the torture *capillorum*."

The auditor Valentino Turchi, confounded, purposely declined his head. Luciani continued :

"Yes: my opinion is that we should begin this morning with the torture *capillorum*, and then we can decide, according to her relations."

When Beatrice appeared, with her pale and suffering countenance, and eyes dim with tears, Luciani strove to compose his ferocious features, and soften his harsh, imperious voice.

"Brave girl! how much my heart has suffered, in inflicting on you the torture, God alone can tell you! I also am the father of girls of the same age, if not the same beauty, with yourself; and when I saw you in such agony, I asked myself; 'How would I feel if children of my own blood were subjected to such tortures?' The duty of the magistrate, the piety of the Christian, induce me to implore you to pause and reflect. Consider your youth! What avails your obstinacy? I have already told you, and again I repeat it, the proofs of your guilt are numerous and convincing; the confession of your own accomplices condemns you. Seek to merit, by an ingenuous confession, the pardon of his holiness. Of the sacred keys entrusted to him by God, he likes far better that which opens than that which locks. Above all, he is most solicitous of the renown of clemency; and as he is by name, so would he be by reputation. Do not, therefore, compel me, Signora Beatrice, to be rigorous; consider the torments you have already suffered; yet these are trifles, pleasures, compared with those dreadful tortures (and here his voice recovered its harshness) reserved by justice for obstinate and incorrigible culprits."

"Why do you tempt me?" answered Beatrice, calmly. "Is it not enough to tear my body to pieces? Must you also torture my soul? My body is yours . . . violence places it in your power . . . you may torture it as you like . . . but my soul was given me by God, and it shall

neither be frightened by your threats, nor flattered by your caresses."

Luciani could restrain himself no longer, but striking the desk with his clenched fists, exclaimed :

" *Ad torturam ad torturam capillorum. . . .* Where is Master Alexander ? He should always be present while the court is in session, especially, when I am the President."

" He has gone, by order, to Baccano, on business connected with his profession : he left word that he would return to-day."

" All leave me alone, when I most need them. It is your business, then, Carlino : you are a good fellow, and very strong : do your duty now, creditably."

These words were addressed by Luciani to the executioner's assistant, who, rubbing his hands, briskly replied :

" I will do my best. . . ."

The truth was, that Master Alexander, availing himself of the opportunity afforded him, had left home. Two ruffians now approached Beatrice, unbound her beautiful fair hair, twisted the ringlets together, tied them tightly with a cord, and suddenly raised her from the ground.

A deformed beauty is more painful to the sight than ugliness itself. The traveler, as he passed through Greece, would hardly notice the ruins of Venetian or Ottoman fortresses ; but his heart would be saddened as he contemplated the Parthenon, mutilated, as it is, by time and the Turks.

The hair of the poor martyr suspended her body ; stretched by the weight, her skin broke on her forehead and along her cheeks, and threatened to burst at her ears ; but I will not attempt the description of her horrible sufferings ! Luciani, now as ever in his mastiff-like attitude, now and then called out :

"Confess the truth. . . ."

"I am innocent. . . ."

"Give her another pull another another confess the truth. . . ."

"I am innocent. . . ."

"Ah! you will not confess? Well, we'll see who can be the most obstinate. Add to this torture the ligature *cannubis*. . . ."

Carlino, prompt as lightning, proceeded to obey the order, and aided by his attendants, twisted in a skein of hemp the right hand of Beatrice, till the bones cracked and the skin broke. At every contortion of agony, the president screamed out:

"Confess your crime!"

"Oh, my God! my God!"

"Confess, I tell you!"

"Oh, God of Heaven help your innocent creature!"

"Twist harder, and shake her more violently so it is well twist and shake her all at once so"

"Oh, my mother! a draught of water I am dying . . . for charity's sake . . . water . . . water."

"What? Relief? Confess then."

"I"

"Down, well! Are you?"

"I am innocent. . . ."

Luciani's fury now knew no bounds. Blind with rage, trembling with anger, and gnashing his teeth, he cried out:

"Twist—crush the bones twist, I say until she vomits the confession of her crime."

"Alas! what agony! I am a Christian oh, death! death!"

"Confess con. . . ."

A frightful fit of coughing assailed Luciani at this moment : he could hardly breathe ; his eyes projected from their sockets, and a viscid humor specked with blood flowed from his mouth and nostrils, yet he continued to stammer :

"Con . . . fess . . . confess vile . . . girl!"

"I am innocent."

"Quick give her the torture of the small cords the small cords, do you hear?"

The executioners seemed exhausted ; the by-standers were satiated with the fearful spectacle ; Beatrice scarcely gave a sign of life.

"The small cords, I say the small cords : " thus growled Luciani, like a hyena, between his fits of coughing.

The executioner's assistants, stupefied, stood motionless ; while Luciani, who could only utter indistinct sounds, was choking with rage. Indeed, the former began to think the president had lost his senses ; for the torture of the small cords consisted in binding the victim with an innumerable number of cutting strings, and then pressing the body in such a manner that nerves, veins and flesh were cut, and the whole person became one hideous wound ; it was quite evident, therefore, that in her present state, Beatrice could not undergo such a torture without fatal results.

On the threshold, opposite the judge's bench, suddenly appeared the livid features of Master Alexander. He paused a moment, glanced at the frightful scene before him, and then, without any apparent emotion, approached the tortured girl, looked fixedly into her face, and felt her pulse. This done, he twisted his impassive face towards the judges, and addressing Luciani, said :

"Illustrious judge, make known clearly your desire; do you wish this girl to confess, or die?"

"Die now? God forbid! She must confess. . . ."

"Then, she can sustain no more torture to-day."

Thus, in those days, did the executioner teach humanity and moderation to judges.

"Master Alexander," said Luciani, spitefully, "with your permission, I think myself as well informed as you, and. . . ."

The notary Ribaldella, who always came to the rescue of his patron, apprehending some great scandal, cut short the president's speech, by saying:

"Most illustrious Signor President, you, doubtless, remember the proverb you have often told me, 'Who pulls the cord too hard breaks it.' If you will allow me to speak, my opinion is, always deferring to your superior judgement and ability, illustrious judge, my opinion is. . . ."

"Well; out with it," said Luciani, ill humoredly.

Ribaldella, then, rising from his seat, approached Luciani and whispered his opinion in his ear. It must, indeed, have been an infernal one; for the president, who had listened with a severe countenance, brightened up at once, and almost smiling, said:

"Go . . . you are a clever fellow, truly." Then, addressing the executioner, exclaimed: "You may suspend the torture, Master Alexander. Besides, you will try to comfort the patient and restore her. Will you, illustrious colleagues, have the goodness to wait here a few moments."

With these words, he left the hall.

Twenty minutes had hardly elapsed when, in the corridor where Luciani had disappeared, a clanking of chains was heard, and soon after Giacomo and Bernardino Cenci

and Lucretia Petroni made their appearance. They looked as though they had suffered beyond measure ; pictures of extreme woe and sorrow. Luciani followed, as the herdsman drives before him the cattle doomed to the slaughter house.

Since the night of their arrest, Giacomo and Bernardino had neither seen each other, nor Lucretia Petroni. Their prison doors had opened suddenly, and to their astonishment, they now found themselves in each other's arms.

Their passionate delight and fondness at this most unexpected meeting having somewhat subsided, Luciani informed them that he hoped, through their instrumentality, to overcome the unconquerable stubbornness of Beatrice. "This baneful obstinacy," said he, "was a formidable obstacle to terminating the process, and retarded, of course, the pardon of his holiness, which would immediately follow the confession. As for himself, he deeply regretted the tortures to which, in the discharge of his duty, he was compelled to subject Beatrice. He had not now the courage to torture her more ; he relied on them to aid him in overcoming her obstinacy ; he begged them to assist him as their true friend and a Christian, and to trust to him as their best advocate and protector, and one who could best mediate in their behalf with his holiness."

It is very easy to deceive the confiding ! and how agreeable it is to believe what we hope ! In such absolute need of comfort were the miserable brothers Cenci and Lucretia Petroni, that they abandoned themselves wholly to Luciani, who, in his joy, promised they should no more be separated. The face of the hypocrite glowed with the pride of triumph.

Are victories achieved by force more or less glorious

than those acquired by fraud? I know not. I only know that force and fraud were twins, born of injustice.

When the two Cenci and Lucretia beheld the torn and bleeding form of Beatrice, and her face livid as death, they burst into floods of tears, knelt around and kissed the skirts of her garments they feared to touch her lacerated hands, lest it should increase her sufferings.

It was enough to break one's heart to see those wretched creatures, with chains on their wrists, kneeling around the fainting girl as if to adore her! When Beatrice recovered from her swoon—a swoon in which she dreamed she had passed away from this mortal life—and, opening her eyes, beheld her beloved relatives kneeling around her, she seemed to be satisfied of the reality of the vision, and exclaimed:

“At last, by God's mercy, I am dead!”

And again she closed her eyes; but her acute suffering returning, she again opened them, and this time was conscious it was no dream.

“Ah! dear ones,” said she, “how is it that I see you all again?”

“And thee, Beatrice! good God! to see thee thus! Alas! alas!”

After a brief interval Giacomo rose up, and the clanking of his chains sounded like a mournful exordium to the following discourse, which he addressed to his sister:

“Sister, I beseech thee, by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, not to suffer in your person any further cruel treatment. Confess what they wish, as we have done. There is no remedy for it! I see no better way to escape from this fearful difficulty; it will, at least, save us from endless martyrdom, and we shall get rid of life and torture at one blow. The wrath of God hovers over our heads; shall we dare to oppose his irresistible will? I bow be-

neath his chastising rod and prostrate myself before him. Since it avails not to resist, I strive to soften the rigor of destiny by prayers, humility, and tears."

Bernardino, raising his innocent hands in a supplicating manner, followed his brother Giacomo in a strain of entreaty :

"Confess for the sake of my love, Beatrice, whatever these judges desire ; for the Signor President has promised to have us all released and sent home in season for the vintage."

Donna Lucretia added :

"Trust, my daughter, in the holy *Madonna of Griefs* ; she is the only consoler of the afflicted. After all, who among us is innocent ? We are all sinners. . . ."

Whilst being thus supplicated, the eyes of Beatrice met those of Luciani, which were flashing with joy. Secure now of his new plan, he was plotting against each and all.

Agitated by the manifold emotions of anger, horror, and disgust, Beatrice could scarcely refrain giving vent to her passions, but checking herself, she thus addressed her relatives :

"It was with the bitterest sorrow I heard that you failed to resist the trial by torture, and yielded at the first pangs of agony, abandoning your honor as the soldier throws away his arms on the day of battle ; but I will not reproach you. Only permit me to ask why you desire me to share your ignominy ? Do not envy me, I pray you, my crown of martyrdom, since it is more glorious than if studded with jewels ! Listen. Holy men have taught us that we cannot take our own lives. Now, as to ourselves, does it not appear a greater sin to destroy, by a falsehood, our own reputation, which is the very life of the soul ? Pagan Rome beheld a guilty woman endure intolerable

tortures with the greatest constancy, and, biting off her own tongue, spit it in the face of the executioner, rather than reveal the conspiracy, with which she had become entangled; and I, a frank, Christian virgin, shall I not be able to bear torments in witness of my innocence? And what do you hope to gain by your cowardice? To preserve your lives? Know you not they want our lives for another object than that of satisfying justice? Have you any idea of this object? It is our property they want. Our riches are our crimes. They may take my riches; but they shall not rob me of my fair fame. Though all earthly things abandon me, two angels will continue to keep me company; one in whose charge is innocence, in that of the other constancy. They sustain me in all my trials; and at the last will bear me on their wings to my Creator. Adieu, oh, earth! deluged as thou art with tears and blood! Adieu, ye malignant atoms that call yourselves men! Adieu, time, thou faint scar on the face of eternity! A ray of celestial joy shines upon me! I am happy—oh, how happy!—how sweet it is to die! . . .”

And she swooned away.

The sun which, until this moment, had been obscured by clouds, now shone in upon this melancholy place, through an elevated window, and the languid autumnal ray fell on the face and breast of Beatrice. The golden locks scattered about her shoulders, and the twisted knots which still remained, glowed like that luminous halo with which the head of the mother of Christ is generally encircled. It seemed a sign of her approaching divinity.

No one dared breathe. Luciani was discouraged, his soul having been surprised in the act of compassion. The Notary Ribaldella was in a sort of truce, despite his will, with his perfidious thoughts, while the Notary Grifi,

not to be idle, mended mechanically the pens, and let a tear distil from his right eye.

Beatrice, having recovered from her swoon, was again implored by her kneeling relatives :

"Beatrice angel we pray thee tell us how to imitate thee."

The maiden raised herself slightly, and with resolute voice cried,

"Learn how to die !"

"And we will die," exclaimed Giacomo, rising and shaking his chains at the judges; "we are innocent; we have neither killed, nor commissioned any one to kill our father. Our confession has been extorted from us by torture, and by the snares you have laid to entrap us."

The face of Beatrice almost changed color, so great was her pleasure at hearing this; and in a voice, sweet as a mother's blessing, she said :

"Martyrdom on earth is called glory in heaven; persevere and die as died the true believers."

Luciani had readily driven from his heart his unusual leaning towards humanity, as a temptation of the devil; besides, instead of profiting by his new mode of procedure he had lost, on the contrary, not a little: so, suddenly becoming furious with rage, he exclaimed :

"We shall soon settle accounts with you again, and we will see if your deeds are as courageous as your words. Meanwhile, Master Alexander, submit the girl to the torture of the *taxillo*."

"Did I understand you to say, illustrious President, the *taxillo* ?"

"The *taxillo*: neither more nor less than the *taxillo*. Is there any obstacle in the way ?"

"No," replied Alexander, shrugging his shoulders, "I only thought I had, perhaps, misunderstood you."

And he started for the taxillo.

The taxillo was a sort of wooden wedge, besmeared with turpentine and pitch. The devil in the shape of a Dominican Friar, invented this cruel torture in Spain. Spain! unfortunate country, where superstition has left so deep a trace that the Spaniards, even in the present wonderful effort of all nations to ameliorate their condition, seem to be condemned to act, for a long time to come, the part of the centaur, half man, half beast. Where are the sons of the gallant cavaliers who were always ready to couch a lance in honor of the ladies? Where the descendants of the doughty knights who, for one glance from the eyes of beauty, shrunk not from the most perilous enterprises? Where the children of those valorous champions who furnished themes for the poet's song? Arms and love are silent now; the Moors vanished under the ruins of the Alhambra. To those brave warriors have succeeded the hooded fraternity of the Holy Inquisition, who found no better mode of protecting themselves from persecution than by torturing others. Behold, I pray you the extent of the stupidity and superstition of these monks! naked to the waist, behold them scourge themselves under the windows of their mistresses, until the blood gushes forth, and then present them with the ensanguined lash in token of their constancy! Thus, thanks to friar-rule, were bound together the Graces and Furies, a monstrous knot that disgraced even that of the ancient Mesentius.

The brothers Cenci and Lucretia Petroni, like persons stupefied, observed all that took place. Master Alexander laid bare the left foot of Beatrice—that foot, which rivalled Grecian sculpture in beauty and whiteness—and thrust the sharp edge of the wedge between the flesh and the nail of the big toe. They shrank back with horror

at the sight, but the torture had only commenced. Taking a small candle, Master Alexander lighted it at a lamp burning before an image of the Redeemer, and then set on fire the wedge, which was made of combustible pine wood. The blaze speedily reached the other toes, and spread around her foot.

Excruciating were the pains produced by this inhuman torture; more than human nature can endure; yet Beatrice, fearful of discouraging her relatives, and on the other hand, anxious to set them a worthy example, subdued her sufferings and was silent. But though silent, she could not repress an intense quivering or shuddering, nor the roll of her bewildered eyes, nor that low, convulsive moaning which always accompanies acute agony.

Driven by despair at seeing their innocent sister in such fearful suffering, the brothers and Lucretia fiercely approached Luciani and hurled their threats in his face: but their rage was useless, for their hands were fettered, and they were separated by an iron railing from the judge. Luciani, however, was frightened, and, seizing his chair as if to defend himself, howled from behind it as from behind a rampart:

"Take care lest they get loose from their chains! Hold them! They belong to the Cenci family, and tear in pieces."

Master Alexander, availing himself of the confusion, had let the wedge fall from the foot of Beatrice.

The Cencis were easily restrained. Luciani, in great agitation of mind, observing that all present were deeply impressed with this scene, suspended, for a time, the tortures, which in those days were called "*examinations*."

"Take them back to the door; convey them separately to their prisons;" screamed Luciani. "Give them the food

of repentance . . . let them drink punishment . . . let them eat despair."

Beatrice was borne back insensible to her cell, and there consigned to medical care. The physician was of opinion, that the girl could not be again submitted to torture for a whole week, and that, if it were necessary, he would affirm the same either in words or writing, because, above all things, it was his peculiar province to see that the laws of humanity be not violated !

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SACRIFICE.

"Aye, heaven and earth do cry 'Impossible!'
The shuddering angels round the eternal throne,
Veiling themselves in glory, shriek 'Impossible!'"

MATURIN'S BERTRAM.

"LET him come in, and quickly."

Such was the order given by Cinzio Passero, the Cardinal of San Giorgio, to his chamberlain, when the latter announced that the President Luciani earnestly desired to speak to his eminence.

Luciani, advancing a few paces, stopped in the middle of the room, his head bent in reverence; and in this attitude he remained without uttering a word.

The cardinal, lowering his brows, to conceal the satisfaction that reflected from his eyes, demanded slowly, and with affected indifference, such as generally precedes an ingratitude:

"Well, then; what now? . . . Is this famous trial then finished?"

"Your eminence," replied Luciani, with a despairing look, "sees in me renewed the case of Sysiphus. . . ."

The cardinal, judging how matters stood, rather from the countenance than the words of the president, cast aside his feigned indifference, which he found a troublesome mask, and angrily replied:

"What does that signify? Speak without metaphors. . . ."

"It means, your eminence, that we have failed to obtain from Beatrice any sort of confession whatever; and the other Cencis, influenced by her example, have withdrawn what they had already confessed. . . ."

"But you . . . you have, perhaps, been also influenced. . . ."

"I!" exclaimed Luciani, in a tone that intimated his eminence had egregiously blundered; "not at all! The cord, the torture *capillorum*, the torture *vigilia*, *conubbi-orum*, *rudentium*, *taxilli*, I have employed them all, your eminence, and so incessantly, that I was myself filled with horror, and feared to prolong them, lest incalculable damage should accrue to the trial."

"Has she not confessed under the *taxillum*?"

"Not even under that."

"What? Do you now make the *taxillum* soft as butter?"

"We make it, your eminence, of pine, well pitched and pointed; and I had ordered all the different kinds of torture to be inflicted with the greatest severity; but Master Alexander advised them to be suspended, lest they should prove fatal."

"Who is this Master Alexander?"

"The executioner, your eminence."

There are in all languages some words, which fall harshly on the ear, and shake oftentimes the nerves, and *executioner* is, doubtless, one. The cardinal curled his lip, and shook his head, as though he would say: "And what has the executioner to do with us?" To this silent question, Luciani as silently replied: "What has he to do? he has his part, I take it, to perform; and thou art angry because his time is not yet come, thou scarlet man! thou relative of the executioner, in many other respects than the color of thy robe!"

"And when you found," replied the cardinal, "that torture availed nothing, why did you not employ persuasive means?"

"I'll tell you what I did, your eminence; I ventured to promise, (conscious, however, that your eminence or his holiness could readily break it, if either thought proper,) that all their lives should be spared, if she would confess. I directed those who had already confessed, to be present, after Beatrice had been well tortured, that they might induce her, by prayers and supplications, to confess also; assuring them it was their only hope of safety. It was all lost breath! The girl, indifferent alike to caresses and torments, obstinately refused, and though suffering, more than human strength can bear, under the torture of the *taxillum*, begged her brothers to imitate her constancy, and retract all they had confessed. How the case now stands, I cannot state positively; they listened to her entreaties, and, for aught I know, may have withdrawn their confession. The club has struck its blows, and terrible ones, as usual; but the stone is harder than the hammer."

"No! No one can ever persuade me that all the diligence and energy it merits have been displayed in this trial."

"Indeed, your eminence, you do me great injustice. But I have not told all. Suspecting that sorcery, perhaps, enabled the accused girl to resist so obstinately, I ordered, (and was myself present at the operation,) her body to be closely examined, to discover, if possible, the diabolical spot mentioned by the masters of that mysterious art."

The cardinal, a little annoyed, could not abstain from shrugging his shoulders; while Luciani said to himself: "I am not surprised that a cardinal of our holy mother church does not believe in the devil!"

"Then," demanded the cardinal, resolutely, "what do you propose to do?"

"Eh! I came here, purposely, to obtain wise opinion of your eminence, for as all the world knows, your eminence is prolific in expedients."

They now exchanged glances one with the other: already they hated each other. Greediness and ferocity united form an infernal cement, which binds indissolubly the souls of wicked men, until their crime be consummated: this done, the accomplices share, among themselves, the prey, the hatred, and remorse.

When the blood shall be shed, the cardinal will hate Luciani with the double hatred of one who is, at the same time, an accomplice and ungrateful. Luciani will hate the cardinal for his haughtiness and wickedness: even now they abhor each other, one from contempt, the other from fear.

A slight rap is heard at the door: permission to enter being given, a chamberlain announces to his eminence that the advocate, Prospero Farinaccio, desires an audience.

"Farinaccio!" exclaimed at once both the cardinal and Luciani. The cardinal remained a moment absorbed in thought, then said to the chamberlain:

"Let him come in. You, Signor Luciani, have the goodness to await our orders in the antechamber."

We leave the reader to imagine if the heart of Luciani could have received a more poignant wound! What! He to leave the room in presence of an advocate? He to wait for the end of the audience, in the antechamber? He! who was accustomed to treat his equals with arrogance, and his inferiors with insolence? Henceforth, in what estimation would he be held by the chamberlains, among whom he was thus compelled to wait, during the conference of Farinaccio with the cardinal?

The eager desire of Farinaccio to confer with the cardinal, the pope's nephew, and the preoccupation of Luciani in leaving the room, resulted in these two personages coming into violent, unexpected collision at the threshold of the door ; and the advocate being a stout, robust man, while the president was feeble from illness and scarcely able to walk steadily, the consequence was that the latter came very near making his way backwards, towards the cardinal, and might have upset his eminence, had he not grasped with both hands the gown of the advocate. Farinaccio was not a man to laugh at such an occurrence ; but, experienced as he was in human passions, strove to excuse the involuntary fault of his body, and to appease the president by courteous words, and a profound salutation.

"Most worthy Signor President, my humble duty to your worship !" So obsequious a salute from so distinguished an advocate, in presence too of the chamberlains, acted like a charm on Luciani, who decided to reply in a tone indicative of his pleasure :

"My respects to you."

"Eminence," began Prospero Farinaccio, after saluting the cardinal in that frank and noble manner which so well became him ; "I will expose freely the 'cause which prompts me so earnestly to confer with your eminence. I am come to crave permission to assume the defence of the accused Cencis, assisted by some of my learned colleagues."

"Advocate," replied the cardinal, darkening his brows, "what is it you demand ? Do these wretches seem to you deserving of such an honor as you propose ? The enormity of their crime repudiates it ; and, now that their trial is ended, it would be extraordinary, indeed, to grant them a defence."

"Eminence, they are entitled to defence by divine precedent. The Lord granted it to Cain, and no one, it seems to me, knew better than He that Cain was guilty."

"True enough ; but human prudence has established the principle, that all atrocious cases are to be excluded from this privilege ; and parricide, it seems to me, comes under that category. Tell me, advocate, did these cruel children grant their father any time for his defence ? More than that, and what is still worse, did they even allow him time to reconcile himself with God and save his soul ?"

"I will not deny it, eminence ; but allow me, most respectfully, to suggest, that as this is a case of exception, we should not proceed according to ordinary rules, and leave all to the discretion of the judge."

"Certainly, save with respect to the increase of rigor ; for, were this otherwise, and it surely cannot escape your shrewd sagacity, severity would bear no proportion to the enormity of the crime. Does this appear to be logic ?"

"Nevertheless, your eminence, there is one thing more powerful in the world than logic, and that is decency. I will not remind your eminence of the many favors which attach me to the sacred person of his holiness, and to your own ; nor of my unceasing and ardent endeavors, according to my humble ability, to promote the interests of your illustrious family : by so doing, indeed, I but strive to pay a debt of gratitude : but enough of this. I have simply referred to these things, to convince your eminence, that, though you might easily find an abler and wiser counselor than myself, you can never have a more zealous and devoted friend and servant. Now, then, I wish to acquaint your eminence, that for several days, an opinion has prevailed in Rome, and is constantly gaining ground, that Bernardino, only twelve years of age and of an amiable

disposition, could not possibly have participated in the parricide, and much less so his sister Beatrice, who excites compassion by the renown of her beauty, and the courage and fortitude she displayed under the severest applications of judicial torture. Calumny is gradually diffusing the idea that we seek to include all the Cencis in the same sentence, because, forsooth, some one aspires to the possession of all their properties : even among the nobles there are those who deeply regret to see this illustrious family threatened with entire extinction ; a family, said by some learned men, to be descended from the ancient Romans. Now it seems to me, eminence, and many others are of my opinion, that to remove all pretext for slander, it is essential to grant the accused privilege of defence, of advocates ; in short, the assistance of the law. It would be difficult for you to imagine another question, that calumny has been busy circulating, which is this ; how is it possible for a child to escape the hands of old foxes in the forum ? and that child, an inexperienced girl, frightened with threats, surrounded by seductions ?”

Cardinal Cinzio felt his heart swell at these words ; but up to this moment, accustomed as he was to restrain his impulsive character and to dissemble, he had feigned to coincide in all the advocate had said, and sometimes smiled approvingly : fear, however, which makes priests cruel, makes them also irresolute, and he who knows how to avail himself skillfully of this weakness, is sure to succeed so long as it endures. At the last words of Farinaccio, the cardinal, with ill repressed anger, could not help exclaiming :

“ And how dare you suspect such horrors ? ”

“ It is not I who suspect, Eminence, it is calumny ; nor does rumor stop here, but declares that the confessions of the miserable accused, being extorted by the most cruel

tortures, should not be believed ; and that it would have been much better to put an end to them at once."

The cardinal, to check his rage, began chewing some paper, and from the corners of his mouth trickled down the white froth like venom. The advocate, a very sagacious man, observing he had struck the stoutest blow, now strove to soothe the cardinal, and thus continued :

"It is a source of great pain to me, Eminence, though I have spoken in my written works of torture as the queen of evidence, to hear the reputation and integrity of others so much vilified ; nor should I have sought this interview, had I not felt confident of the guilt of the accused, and certain of obtaining an ingenuous confession, which would at once baffle calumny, and give his holiness a splendid opportunity of showing the world another example of that clemency for which he is so distinguished."

"Do you really hope to make them confess ?" inquired the cardinal, assuming a severe countenance.

"I do, Eminence."

"All of them ?"

"Yes, all of them."

"I fear, Signor Prospero, you assume a burden too heavy for your shoulders ; for the obstinacy of these wretches is equal to their wickedness. The doors of mercy may be opened to the prayers of the penitent, but never to the haughty importunities of the stubborn. The trial has elicited sufficient proof to convince the doubting Pirrone himself. We are not accustomed (and here his eyes flashed) to regard the clamors of the vulgar. When was ever the eagle frightened by a viper ? He seizes it in his talons, soars with it to the clouds, and then dashes it down against the rocks. We have in our possession instruments capable of shortening tongues, and of preventing one lip coming in contact with the other ; instruments

to the use of which these words of sacred scripture are particularly applicable, 'Eyes they have, but see not; ears they have, but do not hear;' and we well know how to use them."

"Oh! as to this, I have already hinted it to the people;" the advocate hastened to reply, fearing he may have gone too far, and anxious to secure an honorable retreat. Then, affecting a contemptuous smile, he continued: "I assure your eminence, I made people understand that perfectly; and that those measures might be adopted, noiselessly and without scandal, which should seem most conformable to your wishes and justice, I resolved, well knowing your magnanimous spirit and admirable prudence, to communicate all I knew, fully and frankly, to your eminence. Indeed, I never ceased saying to those, who feared to inform your eminence of these rumors in Rome, 'What do you fear? You do not know, ignorant that you are, the good and generous heart of Cardinal San Giorgio; nor the depth of his love and zeal for the welfare of the Holy See, and the dignity of his illustrious family.' And it is to confirm what I have said that I am come to confer with your eminence. Nothing now remains but to earnestly implore an approval of my behavior; and trusting your eminence will consider rather the spirit than the form of my discourse, to humbly beg pardon for any unintentional expressions that may have seemed too bold and liberal."

The cardinal thought the conduct of Farinaccio very strange, as it really was. He could not discover its hidden springs; and, accustomed to suspect everything, he had now his doubts as to this mysterious speech of the advocate. He, therefore, neither praised nor censured Farinaccio. "He would take time," he said, "to reflect upon it;" and urged, as a motive for delay, the pretext that he

must submit the matter to his holiness. They took leave of each other, rather pleased than otherwise with the interview: Farinaccio, because he hoped to succeed in his purpose of defending the accused; the cardinal, because he trusted to obtain, by means of the advocate, a confession from the Cenci, and thus escape the censure he was conscious of deserving. Both knew they were deceiving, yet felt themselves necessary to each other in the execution of their mutual designs.

At the corner of the street, Farinaccio opened the door of a carriage in waiting for him, and thus addressed the personages within: "Eminences, our design is in a fair way of success. Do not lose a moment; go, strike the tree, already wavering. Fear has him by the hair; if she once leaves him, there is no hope for us."

Farinaccio was partly right, partly wrong. He was right in believing that fear had seized upon the cardinal, the pope's nephew; but he erred in supposing that this prompted milder feelings in his breast towards the accused; for his eminence desired their confession only to proceed with bold step and haughty face to the awful consummation of his design; and since the conference with Luciani, being exceedingly anxious to obtain it, had worked on Farinaccio, as on a lever, to move that rock, the great obstacle in his way. To think one's self more sagacious than another is generally the stumbling block of all cunning men; hence justly says the proverb, that among a heap of furs there are more foxes' than donkeys' skins.

But before continuing our narrative, we deem it indispensable to say something of Prospero Farinaccio, who is to act so conspicuous a part in the catastrophe of this historic romance; to tell who he was, and what the motives

which impelled him to interest himself so zealously in behalf of the Cenci.

Prospero Farinaccio was of plebeian origin; but his parents were not so poor as to deny their son a liberal education, and sent him to the University of Padua, where he undertook the study of the law, and succeeded to admiration. Returning to his native city, he soon proved himself a great genius, and readily acquired the reputation of the first pleader and jurisconsult in Rome. In truth, he was endowed with ample learning—for I would not apply the word science to that of the epoch in question—and had amassed abundant materials, of which he afterwards availed himself in the compilation of full thirteen large volumes, which, even in our day, are seen arranged on the bookshelves of our orators and lawyers, as so much accumulated matter to form in their libraries the bulwarks of sophistry and error. We in vain look for the spirit of genuine philosophy in such writers as Farinaccio, Menochio, and others of the same stamp, his contemporaries, with less hope of success in those who succeeded him, and with as little in those who immediately followed. Not a single sentence, nay, I might aver, not a word in these works, but is sustained by the testimony of numberless other writers, who affirm the same doctrine, and that too in the same forms of expression; so that, enveloped in many folds, patched with numerous plasters, what they expound strikes one as not reason, or as reason indisposed, or even convulsed. Sometimes, among these uncultured writings, you fall in with Greek or Latin quotations from ancient authors, which seem surprised to find themselves in such quarters, as an honest man, seized by mistake, would be to see himself in prison among thieves. A purely material mechanism was the chief agent in the compilation of these volumes; and you frequently witness

at the head of a chapter, conclusion, glossary, or other portion of the book, an independent sentence, followed by long drawn out and variously conceived elucidations, like companies in battle, which, instead of throwing light on the subject, gradually confuse, and at length blind your mental vision. Nor does this suffice; for lo! you are presented with amplifications which so tear the leading thought into shreds, that all recollection of the starting point is wholly lost. And, again, as if this were not enough, the amplifications being exhausted, the limitations wheel into line, the scope of which is to restrict the principle propounded within such narrow limits, that by this time you know not what course to steer, or what view of the question to adopt. Any thing like ratiocination is put under ban; authority constitutes law; synthesis and dogma deal alternate blows on your wretched cranium, like two smiths beating their sledge hammers on the anvil. A jurisconsult, being asked what difference there was between a legacy and a deed of entail, replied, "That as for him he could not discriminate, that there must, however, be a difference; for, if not, the emperor would never have specified one document under the the term legacy, and the other under that of deed of entail. The human understanding, rendered powerless from want of light, sinks in utter prostration, like a famished wretch cowering in the straw. The sense of justice being thus perverted, right and wrong seem the mere accidents of force or fraud, according as these triumph or fail; and the sacred administration of justice resembles a race for the palium prize at Siena, in which the rider who first reaches the goal, is pardoned the whip marks he dealt, not in vain, on his adversary's face in the course. While one humpbacked lawyer, with "spectacle-bestrid nostrils," turns over by lamplight the pages of some writer, in search of proper

authority to sustain his assumed argument, another, of the same kind, and under the same circumstances, fingers the leaves of the same book in quest of a contrary doctrine, and finds it too. Compared with the bewilderment of groping through these volumes, sailing without a compass is like going to a wedding; the ship generally reaches its destination, for there are stars to guide it on the voyage; but traveling among books, the intellect is sure to be shipwrecked. The contagion of the mind is readily communicated to the heart; the conscience of the jurist becomes atheistic, and the study of the law is converted into that of distorting, and, if possible, of strangling, of erecting props to sustain tyranny, and stitching up a priest's gown for despotism, that he may make a fine appearance in the procession of Corpus Domini. In our day, the office of advocate is gradually resuming its pristine dignity; but we have still too many lawyers, who wallow in the mire, as if it were a state bed, and too many sophisms, which prey more voraciously on the earth than the locust plague of Egypt. We should esteem simplicity as the eternal characteristic of beauty and truth, for truth moves always in naked loveliness. Beware, then, of eloquence, and take good heed not to clothe it in grand mantles after the Bernini style; sufficient for it is the veil, with which the Grecian sculptor enveloped the Graces. Verily, I have spun out this digression to a greater length than I had intended; but it is now finished, and I have not the heart to cancel it. I will conclude by conscientiously asserting, that whoever would make of the greatest portion of law books in the world a bonfire, in honor of human reason, would justly merit the name of the Omar of civilization.

Farinaccio then was not a man to cope with Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam, his cotemporary; far from it; yet

as one versed in forensic lore he was hailed the first of his time. Restless and indefatigable, he often succeeded, by dint of perseverance, in bringing to a happy issue causes given up by others as hopeless. His extraordinary vitality not finding sufficient occupation in the exercise of his profession, and prevented by the peculiarities of the time from mingling in public affairs, he sought in indulgence and effeminate pleasures a vent to his unwearied energies. Such was his temperament in this respect, that after passing a whole night in gambling and debauchery, he was better disposed than ever in the morning to enter on serious labor. So impetuously did he launch forth on the sea of vice, that he very speedily traversed the space included in the province of sin, and reached the confines of guilt; and rumor would have it that he crossed the boundary line; but his genius and his assiduous cultivation of patrons in the Roman court, enabled him always to steer clear of danger. Clement 8th, himself a lawyer, and who, from his having studied the profession in Rome, Bologna, and Salamanca, was held in the highest repute, constantly employed Farinaccio, while auditor of the *Buota*, and often said of him: "He is a wretched sack, but full of good flour." Liberal as Farinaccio was in bestowing, he was equally so in receiving, and contracted very many debts, some few through necessity, but by far the greater part for the love of them; for, appreciating slightly the ties of friendship, and quite ignoring those of relationship, he was wont to say, that, in his opinion, the firmest bond of union among men was debt, three cords concurring to form the knot, namely, the benevolence of the creditor towards the debtor, the hope of large profit, and the fear of losing both principal and interest; for which reasons, he held it as certain that the sword of Alexander the Great would have turned its edge, had he essayed to

cut it. Yet, notwithstanding all this, underneath that covering of vice was lodged a most excellent heart, ever prone to good deeds, provided they could be executed at once, and to acts of self sacrifice, on condition that they did not too imperatively tamper with his predominant passions. Subject to sudden fits of anger, and as suddenly pacified, he changed speedily from tears to laughter; but the most distinctive trait in his character was the readiness with which he forgot every calamity, even those of the most trying kind; thus following the example of King David, who fasted and prayed during the illness of his child, but after its death rose from the ground, and ate and drank, exclaiming: "Health to the living, and a safe journey to the dead!"

One morning, towards the close of the month of August, a charcoal dealer, leaving, at the door of the advocate's office, four mules laden with his stock in trade, boldly entered the antechamber, with both hands in his pockets, and his hat slouched over one ear in ducal style. The secretaries, eyeing him askance, did not stir, but continued writing without raising their heads from the paper

"Halloo! is the advocate here?"

"He is not here . . . perhaps he's at home."

"I ask you if he be here, not whether he could be found at home."

"And if he were here? Would you have him buy charcoal in his office? Tell me, seriously, are you one of those who fancy clients are toasted?"

"God forbid! I have only heard they are sometimes skinned. But that is of no consequence. Let the Saints Lawrence and Bartholomew settle the matter between them. I am not come to sell charcoal to the advocate, but to consult him on a trifling affair of my own."

"You . . . you, indeed?"

"I I, indeed. Why, is there anything strange in it? People speak to the pope, whose ears are in his feet, and can't we address Prospero Farinaccio, the lawyer, who, I rather think, carries his in his head?"

"But do you know who the most illustrious advocate, Farinaccio, is?"

"Certainly, I do. He is a man like myself:—can it be he is descended from the colossus on Monte Cavallo, or a relative of King Porsenna? Up and be doing: go and announce me, for I know full well he is in the office."

"What an odd fish this is, to be sure!" murmured the first secretary in a low voice: then, in a louder tone, said: "a person wishes to see you."

"I will wait," replied the charcoal man; and with the utmost *nonchalance*, began walking up and down the room, to the great disgust of the writers, who, bursting into frequent yawns, wished the man to the devil, yet not loudly, for his surly aspect and stalwart frame were ample provocatives of caution. From time to time, like other insolent cowards, they gave vent to their vexation in *bon mots* and scornful innuendoes among themselves.

"The owls have migrated earlier this year than usual."

"See how plump he is; he looks like one that had picked up more millet seed than juniper berries."

"Get new linings to your pockets, lest the drink money wear holes in them."

"I will suggest to his worship, to sew two sheets together, that he may have a bag large enough to contain his ready money."

"*Extra jocum*: he must be related to the devil, he's so very swarthy; and I've heard it said the devil is richer than Pope Sixtus, who deposited ten millions of gold pieces in the castle."

"And if he paid with a bill on hell, it would devolve on Ugolino to go and discount it."

"But you are at fault, in one respect; and as to discounting the bill, it should devolve on you, as chief secretary."

"How am I at fault?"

"For not having laid down the tapestries, to prevent the gentleman from injuring his velvet hose."

In this manner they continued discharging, one after another, their squib-like sarcasms. The charcoal man feigned to be wholly unconscious of them, and continued his swinging walk and clownish actions. At this moment a youngster, nourished by the crumbs that fell from the lawyer's table, (the food of copyists,) arose from the desk, and taking a seat offered it to the man, as if to atone for the delinquencies of his companions.

The man accepted the seat, and stared fixedly at the youth, as if anxious to discover what motive had prompted such courtesy amidst so much vulgarity. It was natural benevolence: clients are seldom accustomed to make presents to a copyist, and when they do, other mouths are gaping to swallow them. The lad must have been actuated by that spirit of sympathy which one poor creature feels for another, without hope of recompense, and solely from pure charity. And this be it said in contradiction to the opinion of moralists, who pretend that he who would be reputed perfect should be endowed with all virtues, spiritual and temporal; while I have proved, even in this instance, that superfluity is hurtful, and when these virtues are in excess, one casts a blighting shade over the other, like the leaves of a thickly-foliaged tree.

The charcoal man, having waited patiently some time, perceived at length he was played upon, and that Fari-

naccio was not then in his office; he therefore gently rose up, approached the chief copyist, who, being more advanced in years, should have had more discretion than the others, and pinching him by the ear, said:

"My fine lad! You have overreached me, but wait a little. I advise you to beware, for, as I have a heart to recompense a kindly office, so I have the courage to revenge an insult, even behind the very altar of Saint Peter's. Good by, till to-morrow."

Observing the secretary confounded by his haughty language, and still more by his gestures, he instantly added, by way of atonement: "You have made me lose the opportunity of selling my charcoal;" and then moved to go away: but approaching the youth, he seemed to hesitate a moment as to the advisability of a certain proceeding; let his hand slip slowly down towards his pocket, then withdrew it little by little, and finally thrust it resolutely within, and taking out a piece of money, handed it to the lad, saying: "Take this and give it to your mother."

"Legolino," cried the writers, "hold fast your treasure. Will you turn Duke? Shall I speak to the pope on the subject? Will the Farnese palace be large enough for you? If not, you can increase it, as Sixtus did the Vatican Let us see how much he has given you?"

And the boy, looking at the money in his half-opened hand, replied:

"I don't know: I never saw such coin before: it certainly is not copper, like the *baiocchi* sometimes given me; it shines and it is yellow."

"It must be a *brincolo* let us see. Per Dio, it is a *doppia* a real gold *doppia*! The charcoal man must be a forger."

But one of the secretaries, more cunning than the

others, after well examining the coin, murmured in a low tone to the last speaker, who then held it in his hand :

"Would that your soul was as pure as this money ! But still maintain stoutly that it is false, and that a report must be made of it to the sheriff; in this way, we can wrest it from Legolino and appropriate it to ourselves."

"This piece of money is assuredly false, utterly false," cried the other, "and it is our duty to report that a certain forger gave it to Legolino, and to deposit it in the hands of the sheriff of this department, to prevent any calamity from befalling us. Heavens ! false money ! nothing less than hanging and quartering for him who receives it !" and thus saying, he put it into his own pocket.

Legolino little relished this hubbub ; he wished to recover the money, because it was a present intended for his mother, who could make it available in purchasing a gown ; for the poor woman felt ashamed to be seen in the street in that old, threadbare and patched garment she had worn so long. But it was all in vain ! His entreaties could not induce the others to restore it ; and, besides, as if this were not enough, they so tortured him with jests, that the unhappy lad burst into such a storm of crying and lamentation as to alarm the whole neighborhood.

But lo ! at this moment there appeared, on the threshold of the office door, a man of scornful aspect, habited in the garb of a priest, but whose bearing seemed utterly at variance with his costume. He was tall and robust, his head, somewhat bald on the top, was encircled from ear to ear with long dangling locks of a dark color ; his eyebrows, now knit, were black, thick, and linear ; a wrinkle, commencing at the root of his nose, traversed his forehead ; the pupil of his eye was remarkably vivid, and of a greenish hue ; his nostrils expanded, his lips were swollen, and of a glowing

vermilion, while his cheeks, usually of roseate tinge, were now red with anger.

"What scandal is this?" cried he, with a reproving voice.

The copyists, like frogs that, frightened by some fearful sound, cease their discordant croakings and plunge into the marsh, bowed their heads in silence. Legolino crouched near Farinaccio's legs, in the way painters are wont to depict the eagle at the feet of Jupiter. But Farinaccio, in no degree pacified by their submissive demeanor, questioned Legolino as to the cause of the uproar. Legolino ingenuously told him all, adding that he desired to get back the money, which he meant to give his mother, who was in want of a gown to appear at mass in.

"And why, fellows, have you robbed this boy of his money?"

This question was addressed to the copyists, but as they hesitated to speak, Legolino replied:

"Because they first declared it to be false, and then Luparino hinted, in an under tone, it would be better to buy its worth of Orvieto wine, and drink it together."

Prospero, yielding to the influence of his facile nature, changed suddenly from anger to laughter, and thus rejoined:

"Up, be quick, give to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; that is, give the *doppia* to Legolino; and, for the rest of you, here is a papetto to buy drink with; it will purchase enough for you, and leave something to be wiped up by the sponges, your brothers, in wine. However, bear well in mind, now and for ever, that I would have as much deference shown in receiving the poor as the rich, the people as the nobility; remember this, and remember too that greater achievements have been effected by the *baïocchi* of the people, than by the ducats of the barons."

Thus saying, he entered another room. On the following day the charcoal man presented himself at the same hour, and was received by the secretaries with great urbanity, actuated as they were by the two strongest springs of human action : hope and fear. However, the visitor did not seem to have recovered from the irritation of the previous day, for thrusting back one of his mules who had protruded his head through the office door, he thus tantalizingly addressed the writers :

" Be on the look out, you there, for at the door stands one envying your office of copyist."

But Andrazzio, possessing all that causticity peculiar to the Romans, was restive until he could retort upon him :

" Oh, there is no apprehension on that score ; such a substitute can only be tolerated, when you become the lawyer of the establishment."

The charcoal man, perceiving, by this sally, that these young rascals got rather the better of him, and being pressed by other business, decided to pass on.

The instant Farinaccio saw him, he addressed him courteously, saying :

" I am aware that, yesterday, my clerks gave you some annoyance. I ask therefore your pardon, in their behalf. I have given them such a lesson as leads me to believe they are for ever cured of bantering with you or others. You will now please to tell me in what way I can serve you. Speak, and if you will, sit down."

" I will speak, standing. Tell me, have you heard anything of this affair of the Cenci ? "

" I ? And how, in the name of wonder, could it have escaped my ears ? It is this that keeps all Rome talking."

" And have you never heard a still, small voice in your heart, which pleaded in favor of these unfortunates ? "

" I have indeed heard it, and hear it this very moment,

If you would know my view of the matter, I must tell you that the privacy of the process, the unusual pomp and circumstance, the substitution of Judge Luciani, more cruel than torture itself, for the President Moscati, who is a compassionate and upright man, the age of the newly installed, the presumable inaptitude of the greater part of them, and certain other circumstances, which prudence counsels to conceal, all deeply afflict me, and make me suspect some horrible plot."

"And now, please inform me why you, whose assistance was never economised in behalf of the most infamous of men, appear to be so sparing of it, with regard to these unfortunate sufferers?"

"Because, after naturally sifting the question, I foresaw it would go hard with me, if I turned up this dangerous ground. As already stated, I dread secret and crushing persecution; I fear this will not be a legal judgement, but a judicial assassination: I see, my friend, or seem to see, justice, armed, not with the sword of the law, but the poniard of the brigand, and . . ."

"Continue, worthy advocate," said the charcoal man, in an encouraging yet tremulous voice, seeing he had hesitated in his remarks.

Prospero rose from his seat, and having gone to the door to assure himself it was safely fastened, returned to his place and resumed:

"There is a rumor afloat, although I am very skeptical on the point, that the Cenci, being extremely opulent, and the Pope's nephews proportionately poor and avaricious, a pretext is sought to confiscate their property, and then transmit it, with a certain color—not at all scanty at court—to this set of miscreants."

"Can it be? And this even by the butchery of four most innocent beings!"

"The cardinals wear scarlet cloaks, that the stains of blood may be concealed."

"But is not the object of your office to defend the widow and the orphan? And is an advocate held in no esteem for encountering peril in the glorious warfare he undertakes in favor of innocence against unjust persecution?"

"It is precisely in this respect that the warfare of the *toga* is preferable to that of the *sagune*; and there is extant, an admirable law of the Emperor Leo and Antoninus to that effect but the charcoal man and I should have asked you before pray, tell me who are you?"

"Alas, worthy advocate, be not concerned to know; I am a man, and if this can touch you, the most unfortunate of men."

"No confidence for confidence how can you expect me to unbosom myself to you, if you continue unknown and mysterious"

"The terms of the comparison are not equal. Of your discretion, I have no doubt; of your honor, much less: it is not fear that urges me to secrecy, for greater misfortunes than those I now suffer, can never weigh upon me; nevertheless, I ask you to allow me, as a favor, to withhold my name."

So fraught were these expressions with humble entreaty, so softly did they insinuate themselves into Prospero's heart, that he deemed it would be the height of ill breeding to insist further, and he, in consequence, refrained.

"Well then, have it your own way, and I will now tell you," and here he lowered his voice, "that public report is but too well founded; and firm, as I am, in this belief, how could I, with any hope of success, take on myself

such a weighty and dangerous charge? You, worthy charcoal man, seem like one who should know, as well as I, the verse of Dante :

‘Chè quando l’argomento della mente
Si aggiunge al mal volere ed alla possa,
Nessun riparo vi può far la gente.’ ”

“ Have you the heart then, poor creatures, who are as innocent as our Lord, to die undefended? ”

“ *In primis*, you must know that the defence of parricides is not sanctioned *de jure*, and is conceded only as a favor; secondly, I should like to know how you could prove their innocence.”

“ I? I am certain of it for I am the man who killed Francesco Cenci.”

“ You? and who are you?”

“ He, whom, through your refined courtesy, you have hitherto allowed to remain *incognito*. I killed him with these hands, and would do so now if I saw him, as then, on the point of outraging nature.”

And here he made the advocate a complete *expose* of the whole course of events, confiding to him the most recondite family secrets, and acquainting him with the actions, words and customs of the murdered Cenci, together with the virtue and wonderful constancy of his daughter Beatrice.

While discoursing, Farinaccio made gradual attempts to recognise him, but failing in this, the idea flashed across his mind that it might be Guido Guerra; but from his intimate acquaintance with this individual, he found it difficult enough to reconcile the face, gestures, and much more the voice of the speaker, with those of his friend.

When the charcoal man had finished, he cast his eyes on Farinaccio to scrutinise the expression of his features.

but the latter, absorbed in thought, held down his head. After long consideration, he said :

"If I told you to go and denounce yourself, would you do so?"

"If it could be of any avail to do it instantly, it would not appear too soon."

"No, no; you would be but a victim the more; nor could you succeed in wresting the lamb from the wolf's jaws. Love proved as fatal to the hapless girl as hatred itself. The people charge her with the murder of her father to secure her a crown of glory; the pope does the same to deprive her of her property An arduous task:" and he bent his brow in anguish, "an arduous task, indeed!"

"Ah! Signor Prospero, for charity's sake, do not abandon them."

"And, moreover," said Farinaccio, "I am in bad odor at court, and fear, should they now get the right hand of me, they would lack and cut me like a French loaf."

"I know some at court who will certainly favor you, and I am sure you will find Cardinals Sforza and Barberini disposed to lend you their hearty coöperation."

"This would be something. And how am I to present myself to these purple-robed personages?"

"Frankly; you will find them informed of all."

Farinaccio's mind still wavered in its decision, as was evident from his countenance. The charcoal man earnestly thus renewed his entreaties:

"And now that you know all, will you allow them to perish unassisted?"

"And if I sacrifice myself with them?"

"A benefit, based on calculation, ceases to be such."

The dialogue was continued with such fervor by

both parties, that Guido Guerra, forgetting himself, assumed his natural voice, which made Farinaccio exclaim :

" You are Monsignore Guerra."

" I ? I was such a person."

" *Hen quantum mutatus ab illo*," cried the advocate, extending his hand, which Guerra affectionately pressed, saying :

" And now that you know my wretchedness, now that my woe draws tears from your eyes, will you let me go hence in despair ? "

" Well, *alea jacta est*. However, I do not conceal it from you, I pass the Rubicon with such an oppression of heart as I never yet experienced. May God assist us ! I fear that this once my tact will fail me, but this is not what most afflicts me ; it is with great dread I enter on a course which may prove wholly ruinous, rather than advantageous in its results. I perfectly understand the Cenci cannot well fall into a worse predicament than the present ; however, I would not be the one to send them to their graves. But you, monsignore, be not disconsolate, that, for this reason, I must proceed coolly and cautiously ; rather take courage from the example of our Redeemer, to whom in this case, although most unworthily, I bear a close resemblance. He prayed that the bitter cup might pass from him, but afterward accepted it with undaunted heart and drank it to the dregs. Now go, and rest assured that whatever this brain can devise or these lips utter shall be exerted for the protection of those you have entrusted to my charge."

" I expect all this : other measures will be adopted, if the case prove desperate. You will see her ; you will see, I say, the Signora Beatrice speak not to her of me not a word or rather do speak

and present her this ring, which will gain you favor in her eyes. Between us is the blood of her father it is well but I shed it for her and I love her and she cannot cease to love me ; each bound to each, yet perpetually divided : our affection is a flower which the hand of death will gather." Here he unbuckled the belt he wore round his waist and handed it to the advocate, who made a gesture of refusal, while his cheeks turned red ; but Guerra insisted, saying :

"Think not that this or any other sum can sufficiently recompense your services. I declare, I shall feel grateful to you through life, and by refusing you would give me pain ; and you know full well, Signor Prospero, I have already had more than my share of sorrow."

Signor Prospero strongly persisted in his resolution of refusing the money, but felt it, at length, dissolve like snow in the sun, on thinking that next day was due certain interest to Samson, the Jew ; the same Samson to whom he had applied that verse of Martial, "*Nec tecum vivere, nec sine te,*" which he had translated for his own use, as follows :

"Ne teco posso vivere
Guido, ne senza te."

Farinaccio, left to himself, spent some time in meditating on the singularity of the case and the calamity which weighed on the ill fated family of the Cenci : he then proceeded to elaborate the best plan of defence, which he speedily thought he had hit on ; uncertain, it is true, and dangerous, but, in his opinion, the only one to be adopted. It was one of this great advocate's grievous mistakes, that, what with the unprecedented quickness with which he penetrated his subject, and the press of business that allowed him no time to maturely develop his views, he

seized the first ideas which presented themselves to his mind, and to these pertinaciously adhered. True, he almost invariably hit the mark; but if he missed it, there was no remedy, for as he put his plans in execution the instant they were conceived, he barred the way to all retreat. Finally, like the *Amen* at the end of the *Oremus*, he thought also of Guerra's ducats. He could have wished he had not accepted them, but now that he had done so, he locked them in his coffer, and immediately after, punctual and faithful, took his way to the palaces of the Cardinals Sforza and Barberini, whom he found to sympathize in his undertaking, and heartily disposed to aid him with the whole weight of their influence. With them, he planned the part he was to perform in the intended interview with the pope's nephew, Cardinal Cinzio Passero, and the topics most opportune to touch on in a matter of such delicate moment; while they, studious to aid him, offered to await, at the assigned post, the issue of the colloquy, as they really did, in a covered carriage, and then act with promptness and vigor, according to the turn of affairs.

Luciani, who, impatient of so long waiting, was growling like a chained mastiff, heard his name unexpectedly called, and raising his eyes, beheld a servant who said to him :

"Illustrious judge, his eminence takes leave of you, and for the present orders you to abstain from all further procedure : hereafter, he will give his directions."

These words were uttered in a supercilious tone of voice, for servants generally possess the subtle sense of a blood hound, and can distinguish when one is in flower, when mature, and when ready to fall in the good graces of their masters. Luciani, mortified at being thus thrust aside like a clothes drier in mid July, and more deeply wounded by

the manner in which it was done, looked disdainfully at the servant, as if to say :

"Beware and keep your distance ; for if you fall into my hands, I will show you no man ever insulted me with impunity."

Then, without uttering a syllable, he turned on his heel and went his way.

"Did you mark that look ?" said a lackey to the servant. "Indeed, you showed him too much contempt."

"Say rather, nausea : I would willingly have flung him out of the window, like a leech that, bloated with blood, can suck no more."

"You took care not to fling him into the saloon, for then, having disgorged his blood, he would bite more sharply than ever."

Cardinals Barberini and Sforza presented themselves in the antechamber to pay their respects to his eminence San Giorgio. In the twinkling of an eye they were announced, and introduced amidst a most busy raising of caps and profound bows, from which some of the courtiers actually did not recover ; as happens with rushes growing by the shore, when, in consequence of the unceasing wind, they settle down into a bending attitude. When the cordial and, especially, most sincere greetings had been repeated from four to six times, and the visiting cardinals had assured the cardinal visited, that the only motive of their coming was the desire to tender him their homage, the latter, seeming to pry into the mystery, commenced the conversation by touching remotely on the news current in Rome. Cardinals Sforza and Barberini, knowing what the hawk would be after, and intent on keeping him perched at their pleasure, feigned entire ignorance, so that Cinzio was constrained to speak more

openly. Affecting to enter reluctantly on a discourse they had prepared and committed to memory, they riveted the nail already driven by Farinaccio, slipping in besides several innuendoes of their own, which, said they, prove the rashness of public opinion, and the necessity, for the honor of the Pontificate, of giving it a solemn contradiction; much more so as these were disastrous times for the church, and the heretics, not only in France, but Italy also, were disposed to receive and credit the basest calumnies.

It is needless to record the many arguments alleged on the subject by those purple-robed individuals; suffice it to say, that Barberini and Sforza acquitted themselves with such dexterity as to leave Cardinal Passero persuaded of the necessity of showering liberal largesses for the defence of the Cenci; for in this way he hoped to gather more abundant fruit. He therefore conferred on the matter with the pope, whom he easily won over to his views, while Farinaccio, caressed by a thousand blandishments, had the satisfaction of hearing from Cardinals Aldobrandini and Passero—nephews of the pontiff—that his request was granted. This first success was a most favorable omen for Farinaccio, and a source of great exultation. Poor dupe! The pope's nephews as far surpassed him in craft, as he them in genius.

The advocate, having thanked them in the warmest manner, proceeded without delay to call on the lawyers, De Angelis and Altieri, to induce them if possible to join him in the defence; and after some difficulty persuaded them to be his colleagues in a cause that attracted the attention not only of Rome, but of all Italy. Nor did Farinaccio seek their assistance without most excellent reasons, for, in addition to the fact of their possessing great experience and learning in criminal cases, as their

works show to this day, De Angelis, as an advocate of the poor, was in high favor among the masses of the people, and Altieri a special favorite with the Roman nobility.

In the conference held for the defence, Farinaccio expounded his scheme, which appeared to his colleagues as if it really were rife with danger; but, by dint of copious arguments and powerful eloquence, he persuaded them the occasion afforded no better, and they must deal with this cause as surgeons deal with desperate cases.

De Angelis and Altieri, fully comprehending the gravity of the undertaking, nearly repented of having embarked in it, and, could they have honorably done so, would have broken their engagement; but Farinaccio playfully encouraged them, saying the sky was the region for eagles, the earth for reptiles; and had it been an ordinary cause, he should never have consulted them, the pride and glory, as they were, of the Roman Curia.

Such downright and fulsome flattery could hardly, one would think, influence in any degree such men, who were so well acquainted with the world. Yet it had its effect; they boldly swallowed the dose, and henceforth resolved to second their colleague with all their energy and ability.

It was late at night when Farinaccio brought these preliminaries to a close, and indeed, for one day he had done enough: another would have sought to recruit his exhausted faculties in sleep; but he went straight to his boon companions, who received him with open arms, and all thought of the Cenci was soon drowned in gambling and wine.

But the moment Farinaccio awoke in the morning, he found this thought haunting his pillow, and, setting aside

all other business, devoted his exclusive attention to the cause of the Cenci. Hastily dressing himself, he proceeded to the prison of Corte Savella, and arrived at the instant the gates were being opened.

Being well known in that quarter, it is needless to say he was welcomed with smiles, the more so as, in the character both of prisoner and visitor, he had long since tamed the Cerberuses of this infernal realm. To provide, however, against every contingency, he came furnished with a permission from Monsignore Taverna, governor of Rome, which he exhibited to the jailor on duty, who, having eyed him askance and fully recognized him, refused to look at it, alleging that he had too much esteem for the illustrious advocate to desire further evidence than his word of honor. The notaries produced the process, the meaning of which he soon grasped, first, because it belonged to that daily routine of business with which he had to do all his life; and secondly, because then, more than now, processes, both criminal and civil, resembled very much the oysters dragged beneath the waning moon, the shells of which falling away, it is a mere chance if enough remains wherewith to moisten your mouth. Having got over this business, he asked permission to confer with the prisoners Giacomo and Bernardino Cenci, and Lucretia Petroni, which was immediately granted.

Beatrice Cenci, reclining on the bed in her solitary dungeon, suffered the acutest physical suffering; yet the pangs of her heart far surpassed this material torture. She thought of her lover. True, destiny had hurled its thunderbolts and sundered them as they had been a rock; the sea rages in whirlpools and foams between the dis-severed cliffs, whose summits, though they shall never meet again, yet stand face to face, remindful of their mu-

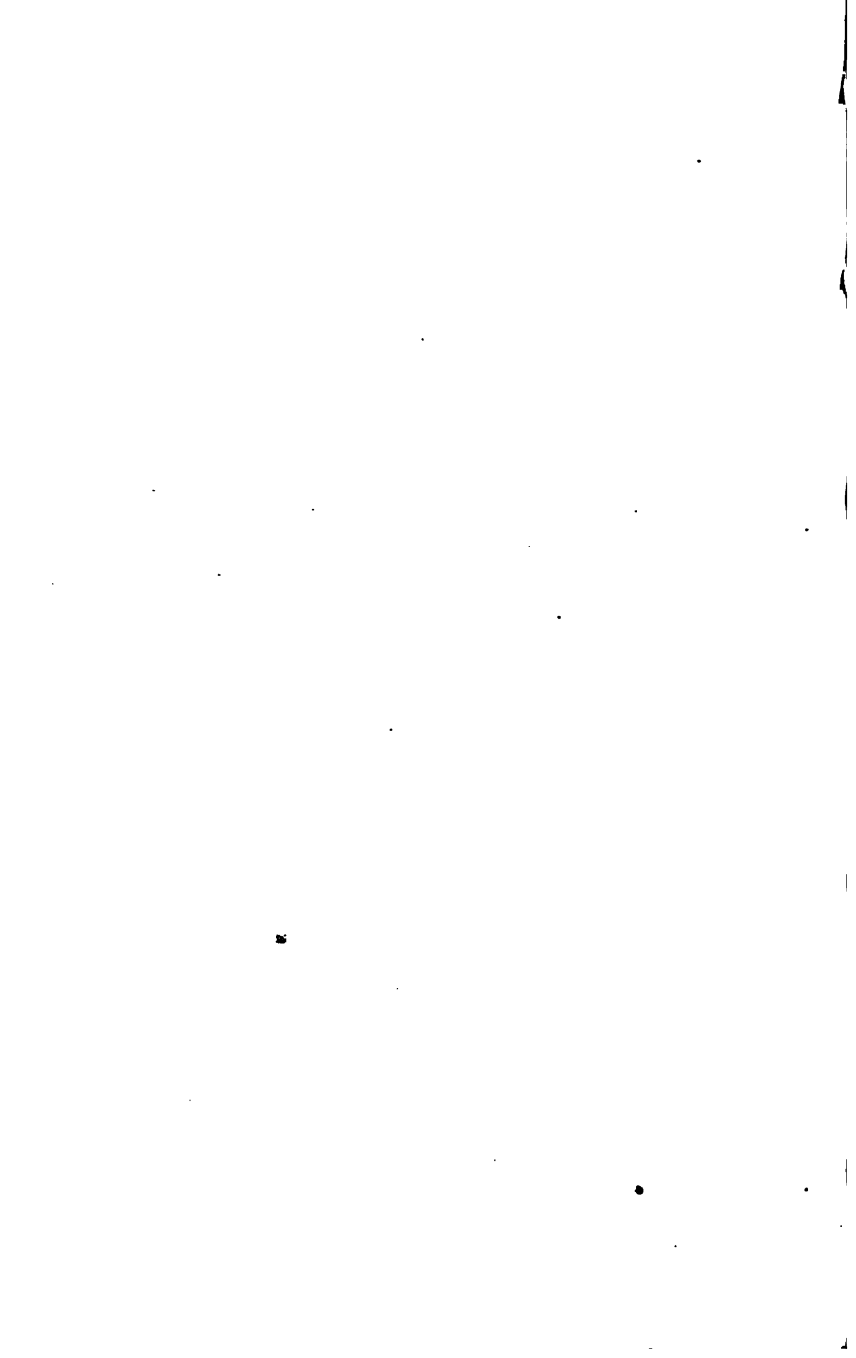
tual woe and bearing testimony that nature had created them united. Her life had now no aim; it had become an inane existence: whether she lived or died, Guido could never more extend her his hand, not even to save her on the point of falling from the precipice, and, as one may imagine, much less to become her husband, for such is the will of God, and let God's will be done!

END OF BOOK III.

BEATRICE CENCI.

IN FOUR BOOKS.

Book Fourth.



BEATRICE CENCI.

Book Fourth.

CHAPTER XXV.

[CONTINUED.]

THE racking tortures which this innocent girl endured were to her a pledge that Divine mercy had decreed her pardon ; she regarded them as an atonement for her sins, and, if there was not presumption in the thought, considered these more than atoned for : yet, were she even constrained to undergo greater torments, she would endure them willingly, for the sake of her soul's salvation. As it was, a pang more or less was of little moment : they had inured her to torture ! Pain clung to her like a second skin ! " Of this life," mused she, " let us speak no more ; it is a vapor that rains its tears and is gone ; let us speak no more of it : henceforth I am only a dweller in the tomb . . . But he ! Will God pardon him ? And why not ? Our Lord pardons all men who repent. But will he repent ? He will not, for he is still so obdurate he would do the same again, under similar circumstances ; otherwise, he would not love, and I, in his place, would have acted and would now act as he. Alas ! alas ! Oh ! my God, save him for me : after such tortures on earth, may I not, at least, behold him in Paradise, embrace and clasp his hand ? His

hand? Yes, for Providence will have erased from my mind the blood with which it was once stained . . . but all these doubts make my soul shudder and faint with the bitterness of second death . . . Oh! that some pious priest could enlighten me! If God, in his infinite bounty, would send me such a spiritual comforter, he would give greater consolation to my harassed soul than Luciani could give pain to my poor body . . ."

"Signora Beatrice," interposed Virginia, thrusting her head through the room door, "the most illustrious advocate Prospero Farinaccio desires to confer with you."

"With me? What have I to do with this advocate? I know him not. But be it so; many have already come; let him also enter."

"And if, without further preamble," observed Prospero to Virginia, "you had simply said, 'the advocate Farinaccio,' would you not have spared so much breath for your last hour?"

The advocate advanced some steps into the room, then stopped short, as if struck with wonder, for, although he had heard marvelous stories of the beauty of Beatrice, fame had never done, he thought, justice to the reality. That divine form, now convulsed with suffering; that pure, sorrow-portraying countenance, made her seem like one of the angels who ministered to the Redeemer in the hour of his passion. The advocate, mute and with feelings of reverence, approached the bed of the reclining girl.

"What would you with me?" enquired Beatrice gently, as she perceived Farinaccio had lost the use of his tongue. It was with difficulty he replied:

"Gentle lady, I present myself before you, moved by your misfortunes, and still more by the entreaties of one who weeps bitter, uncontrollable tears, one whom you at once

abhor and love . . . one, in short, who was never so worthy of being yours as at the instant he lost you for ever. Your throbbing heart must have already told you. . . . I see now it has told you, who sent me hither. . . .”

“He? and does he weep?”

“He does weep, and declares he will die in despair, if you make no effort to save yourself. . . . However, that you may confidently rely on me, he has commissioned me to show and leave with you this ring.”

Beatrice took the ring, and fixing her eyes upon it, asked :

“And has he communicated all to you?”

“All.”

“Quite all?”

And as Farinaccio bowed affirmatively, she continued :

“And now, Signor, what think you of it? Does it not seem to you my nuptials with him resemble those of the Doge of Venice, when, casting the ring into the sea, he espouses the abyss?”

Farinaccio made no reply ; soon, recovering from his emotion, he begged Beatrice to be good enough to hear him with attention, as the matter in question was of the gravest import; and, continuing his discourse, related the particulars already in our possession, then dwelt on the present state of the process, and concluded by saying :

“As for you and yours, after examining the case with the mature reflection it demands, I can discern but one means of safety, and this is, that you freely confess yourself the murderer of your father.”

Beatrice interrupted him with an exclamation of astonishment. If this were a jest, the time, place, and circumstances made it most cruel; if counsel, it seemed to her so monstrously strange, that either she or the advocate

must have lost their reason. Divining her thoughts, **Farinaccio** continued :

"I am well aware my counsel must strike you as being singular ; yet I feel prepared to dispel all your misgivings."

"How is it possible," asked **Beatrice**, "that, after enduring so many tortures to save my fair fame, I could voluntarily rend my heart, by transmitting my name to posterity as a by-word of horror, when I would leave it a theme of sorrow and compassion?"

"Gentle lady, suffer me to mention a fact, which may seem incredible, but, is no less true. It is universally believed you killed the man, who henceforth cannot, without outraging nature, be called your father : some believe so, prompted by certain motives, which, in my opinion, consist less in an unjust hatred of your person, than an unbridled coveting of your property : others there are who adhere to the belief, because they wish you well, because it captivates their imaginations to consider you an heroic girl ; and these hail you chaster than **Lucretia**, firmer than **Virginia**. The people have given you the first place in this trinity of intrepid Roman women, and cling to their idea with religious tenacity. Should any one now try to undeceive them, they would not only disbelieve, but detest him, and perhaps, going to greater lengths, shower blows on his head, as on one about to deprive them of their patrimony of glory. The love of the people is like that of **Jove**, the excessive ardor of which reduced **Semele** to ashes. Were I to enter on this battle field, I should ruin myself without saving you. You, too, by your mere denial, could never convince a single soul you were not the murderer of your father ; nor would you, by so doing, preserve your own life, nor that of him who forfeited you through too much love ; for the judges

consider the proofs embodied in the process sufficient warrants for your condemnation as a parricide, and it is the custom of our tribunals to ordain that, the confession of the accomplices being first heard, 'the contumacious accused be subjected to the *proof* of torture, even till death ensues.'"

"*Amen*; and it seems to me they have already led me to death, so short is the distance that yet remains. It is not so painful to die as men believe; I can assure you of this; I, who almost touch the gates of eternity!"

"No, poor lady, you must not die, and remember your resolution, held magnanimous among the Gentiles, is, according to the Christian faith, most sinful; for he, who can save his life and neglects to do so, is as culpable in the eyes of God as one who commits suicide.

"And shall I consent to live and see fathers shudder at my approach? Shall I struggle to live that I may behold people fix their eyes, in curiosity or terror, on my brow, as if the word 'parricide' were stamped there? Ah! no; may it please God rather that I leave this earth, and lose even the memory of its existence."

"But why imagine that hatred or disgust will cling to you, because the people believe you killed your father? When shall it ever happen, while men's hearts warm at the name of virtue, that they will esteem degraded, or rather will not exalt to the skies, the innocent girl, who defended her chastity by a piously cruel deed? The closer the tie, the greater the outrage, and the more legitimate the resistance. Look at ancient and modern history, and see if infamy, or even wickedness, was ever imputed to those children who, through just vengeance, murdered their parents. Take, for instance, the example of Orestes; although the injury he vindicated differed widely from that offered to you, and the circumstances were not

parallel; he, killing his mother many years after the murder of Agamemnon, and this not to save himself from imminent peril; yet ancient wisdom imagined that Minerva herself descended from heaven, and cast into the urn the vote, which, cutting short the wavering counsels of the Areopagi, proclaimed him innocent."

"Tell me, Signor, would you, after the decision of Minerva, have given your daughter in marriage to Orestes? Speak in all candor. . . . Would you marry your son to a parricidal daughter in law?"

"My answer cannot be such as to meet this question, for your case I know to be different, and I trust it will shortly be made to appear in the same light to others as it does now to me. Justice is not a fruit of all seasons; it should be, but is not, nor truth either: both require flowering and unfolding into maturity, and he who gathers them, before being developed, injures both them and himself. In due time, people will learn with astonishment, how a girl of sixteen, after suffering such tortures as neither human patience nor strength have hitherto ever been able to endure, shrunk not, through love of her family, from compromising her life and reputation. As for myself, and I have often reflected on the subject, I can fix on one person only who has made so solemn a self sacrifice, and this was God, not man.

So saying, he took down a crucifix that hung over Beatrice's bed, and throwing it on the counterpane, continued:

"He, far more effectually than any thing I can say, teaches you with silent eloquence what sacrifice is; He, for the redemption of those who had offended, or would in future offend, consented to undergo the ignominious death of the cross: with his precious blood he offered an eternal ransom to eternal justice; a perennial bap-

tism, which flows on our heads as a lavation of sin for ever."

"Yes, but Christ certainly did not die branded with infamy."

"And who was more vilified than he? Who endured more reproach and insult than he? They exempted Barabbas, a thief, from punishment rather than him, and on the cross gave him for companions, Cisma and Disma, thieves also: he himself knew and foretold all this, as the Scriptures say, 'He that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.'"

"And should I invoke the God of Truth as witness of a lie?"

"Ah! let not that disturb you in the least, since, first of all, it is contrary to nature to compel the accused to testify under oath; but this I pass by. What! are we permitted by divine law to defend our lives by taking away those of others, yet are prohibited from protecting them by offering a mere falsehood? Is not homicide a greater crime than perjury? Certainly it is, and were they equal, if, by universal consent, it be allowed to defend our lives by the former, on what ground could the use of the latter be refused?"

"Worthy advocate, you confound, but do not convince me: my mind is not equal to the task of confuting you . . . however . . . here, in my inmost heart, I feel truth is not on your side . . ."

She had not yet finished speaking, when the dungeon door was again opened, and the stepmother and brothers, presenting their woe-stricken countenances, advanced and stood around the bed. They spoke not, moved not, yet their whole persons were eloquent with entreaty; a mute supplication, a lament of the heart, unheard by the ear, but felt by the trembling soul.

By this time, Farinaccio had exhausted his eloquence, and despaired of effecting his purpose. A long silence ensued, during which Beatrice kept her eyes constantly riveted on the crucifix, still lying on the counterpane. Suddenly seizing and kissing it fervently, with plaintive voice, as if reciting the psalm for the dead, she spoke as follows :

“ Since you will have it, so let it be ! Thou, O Lord ! didst hear and witness all these things ; if impious, pardon them, for they were done for a worthy end ; if good, requite them as they deserve. So far as I am concerned, I know there is no refuge for the hopeless, save in despair. The cruel destiny that crushes us, will cease its strokes on our sepulchral stone ; it will hasten elsewhere when it reads on the marble, ‘ Here lie the whole family of the Cenci, decapitated for their crimes.’ However, by reason of my conviction, I will not deprive you of the last ray of hope ; and since it is a sweet solace for the dying to impart that fleeting light, I do not deem myself a useless victim. Could I suffer for you all, and be offered up as an expiation, or rather to disarm the fell destiny which persecutes our family, I would willingly do so ; but, unable to effect this, I sacrifice myself to no purpose ; and of this I think it best to admonish you, sensible as I am of the anguish you will feel when again plunged into the depths of despair.

The window, which was badly secured, yielded at this moment to the wind, that blew fiercely, and the lamp, burning before the image of the Madonna, was, in consequence, extinguished. Beatrice, whose sadness was neither heightened or lessened by this incident, murmured two verses of Petrarch, applicable to her own condition :

“ Siccome fiamma, che per forza è spenta,
Se ne audò in pace l'anima contenta.”

To dispel the melancholy presentiment, Farinaccio strove to utter some words of consolation, but they hung trembling upon his lips. The Cenci wept, and even Prospero's face was bathed in tears; concealing his eyes with both hands and bending over the bed, he sank into profound thought, in quest of some expedient, less perilous than that already devised, for the salvation of these unfortunates; and finding none, he heaved a deep sigh. Having other business on hand, he now took leave of them with mute salutation; while his soul, which had beat high with confidence when he entered the prison, shuddered with an awe and misgiving he had never before experienced.

"Well? Come, tell us what you have wrung from that iron hearted woman?" inquired the president, when he appeared before him.

"Go," replied Farinaccio dejectedly, "she confesses that she was obliged to kill Francesco Cenci in self defence."

"Indeed? By Jove! But you work miracles, most deserving advocate. In truth, if you will only consent to remain at court, I will burn all the apparatus of torture, ordinary and extraordinary."

And Farinaccio, whose spirit resented the unseemly joy of this wretch, replied reprovingly:

"Signor President, remember that the Greeks—and they were Pagans—when they gained a victory over their fellow countrymen, instead of exulting, ordered public expiations."

"Oh! you are a stately man of letters, and walk in sublime paths; I, who move in the common track, am aware that countrymen make presents of eggs to the sportsmen who have killed the fox. Was I not, then, perfectly right in my conjectures? Ha! there is no jesting with me; that *Ave-Maria*-like face of hers never deceived me in the least. *Cura di Angel, corazon di demonio*, as the Spaniards say."

It was then that Farinaccio, carried away by an enthusiasm, the more fervent as it was uncommon to his nature, seized Luciani by the arm, and, conducting him to the balcony, showed him the sun, radiant with all his glory, and said :

“ Could you detach those rays from their source and shape them into a crown, the glittering diadem would be unworthy the virtue of this angelic girl.”

Luciani did not look at the sun, but fixed his eyes on Farinaccio's face, and simply nodding his head in reply, very gravely rejoined :

“ My dear advocate, I look on that witch in a very different light from you, and for two reasons, one more powerful than the other ; first,” and taking off his cap he pointed to his scattered and hoary locks ; “ secondly,” opening his waistcoat, he displayed a little purse suspended to his neck, containing talismans against all kinds of witchcraft.

Farinaccio, recovering from his enthusiasm, began to think, that casting pearls before such a man was in direct opposition to evangelical counsel ; to make up, therefore, for lost time, he merely recommended Luciani to go at once and receive the girl's confession, exactly as she should dictate it, and then withdraw.

Luciani, since he had vainly striven to make Beatrice appear before his tribunal, proceeded, in company with his colleagues and notaries, to the prison of the desolate girl, and received her deposition, by which, exculpating her stepmother and brothers from all participation in the murder, she took the whole blame on herself, declaring that the deed was by no means premeditated, but committed under sudden impulse, excited by the ruthlessness of her father's conduct, and putting herself in Guido's stead, narrated the fact, almost circumstantially, as

it occurred. When questioned by Luciani, as to how she came by the poniard, she hesitated for some time, in embarrassment, but recovering, replied, that she had been long accustomed to carry it about her person, with the intention to kill herself, rather than submit to a violation of her chastity; but in Luciani's cross-examination, she contradicted herself, and it is most likely, that had he taken as much pains to extort the truth, which he abhorred, as he did to elicit falsehood, which pleased him better, Beatrice would have failed in the effort to sustain her assumed part. But the *facts* of the case not being Luciani's object, he winked at the contradiction, and thought it useless to make further investigations, especially as the sum of her statements was, in his opinion, sufficient to bring the whole family of the Cenci to the scaffold, which was all he had bargained for. In the exultant hope of seeing, ere long, all the Cenci executed, Luciani forgot, or, at least, made truce with the hatred he bore the Cardinal di San Giorgio, and, taking the papers containing the process, went straightway to the palace of his eminence, as a wild beast carries its prey to the family den. Entering the reception room, he did not wait to be questioned, but panting with ferocity, said :

"We have we have the long wished-for confession! *Habemus pontificem!*"

Cardinal Cinzio, observing how strongly the canine nature was depicted in President Luciani's face, thought of certain pictures of savage cannibals, and involuntarily shrunk back from his approach. However, after reading over the process, he perceived at once, clear minded as he was, the improbabilities of the deposition, and even expressed a belief that the defence would level this ill piled structure, and that all would dissolve in smoke, like the charms of magicians

at the bursting of the caldron. But Luciani here quickly interposed to remove all doubt, intimating, that particular circumstances should be omitted, and only one point retained, i. e. the confession of the accused to have shared in or consented to the crime; that it was impossible in any process to reconcile all the contradictions and falsehoods, by which the guilty endeavored to escape retributive justice; that, in an affair like this, there was no need of looking for knots in a bulrush; and that when the crime is evident, and confessed by the whole party, as in the present instance, process and cause pleadings are useless, as Sixtus 5th, of glorious memory, inculcated, when, in the matter of the Spaniard, he said, "Why speak of processes? In cases like this before us they are superfluous, and defence is much more so; nevertheless, harangue as long as you like, provided this man be hung before I dine; and take heed to dispatch the business, for I am hungry this morning, and desire an early dinner." And this is what I call justice! These are golden words indeed! I should like to see if what fell to the lot of Pope Sixtus to perform will not be reenacted by Pope Clement; and I should be amused to behold that man who would contest with him the right to do so. Are the keys of the church since Sixtus's time become rusty, or are the hands to which Providence now confides them grown weak and trembling? No, thank God; and since they are not, no one should think so, and facts will prove if any there be who believe so, and that speedily.

Cardinal Cinzio had no need of stimulus, and as the evil loquacity of Luciani flattered his favorite passion, he thought the new president had never spoken with so much sense and eloquence.

Unable to keep these successes secret, they were soon circulated throughout Rome, and excited great commo-

tion among the people. In the streets and squares were seen gatherings of men, and individuals anxiously questioning each other as they met. From time to time tradesmen issued from their shop doors to ask tidings of the passers by, and women thronged the balconies, bending down to catch the faintest whisper. Not less anxiously, I fancy, did the Jews around Mount Sinai await the commandments of God, than did the Romans at this time the mandate from the Vatican, which was to decide the fate of the Cenci; and this mandate was heard amid the darkness, heralded by a crimson flash, the harbinger of blood.

"Let them all be tied to the tails of wild horses, and dragged till death ensues; and their bodies be then cast into the Tiber."

Thus spoke the Vicar of Christ the Redeemer. A cold shudder seized on the Romans; they seemed to hear the funeral knell of Rome. Many there were who turned a deaf ear to such unheard-of atrocity; but others, and among them persons who knew the court and its pitiless cupidity, considered the pope capable of all this, and even greater cruelty.

The intelligence reached the ears of Farinaccio, who, breathless with excitement, and coinciding with the latter, hastened to confer on the matter with the cardinal protectors, and these, with others of the Sacred College, who, although they had hitherto manifested indifference, were, nevertheless, readily convinced that the papal mandate was a most unwarrantable abuse of power, and such as to cast into the shade the most barbarous act ever attempted by that unfeeling friar, Sixtus 5th. True it is, that though only nine years had elapsed since the death of this pontiff, the times were somewhat humanized; nor were even the ecclesiastics themselves persuaded of the

benefit which some maintained he had bestowed on the Church. It was generally known that the letter addressed by Sixtus to Henry 3d, of France, in which this identical sentence occurred: "That he should take care to purge with fire and sword the cancered blood of his subjects;" it was generally known, I say, that this letter scandalized Catholics as well as Protestants. Even the Huguenots dared to tell Henry 3d to his face, that the pope, having established one slaughter house of human flesh at Rome, would fain open another in Paris; that the counsels of Christ's Vicar were abominable in Rome and detestable everywhere. In the teeth of such baseness, how dare he call himself Christ's representative on earth, when even Satan himself would have blushed at such a substitute?

The more considerate cardinals, however, who had at heart the honor of the Apostolic See, proceeded to the Vatican to dissuade the pope from his rash determination. Farinaccio, who feared he was overreached, hastened in another direction, to see Cardinal Cinzio; and being told by the servants in waiting that his eminence had gone to compliment the Spanish ambassador, he threw himself on a bench in the antechamber, exclaiming:

"I will wait." And by his attitude he seemed resolved to remain there, if necessary, all night; but the agitation of his spirit not permitting him to sit patiently, he rose and walked to and fro the while, gesticulating and muttering. Often he looked anxiously towards the door, and oftener still he wiped away the drops of sweat that copiously bathed his brow, witnesses of his sorrow and dejection at the untoward event.

"Perhaps," muttered he, "the cardinal has returned; perhaps it was not true he had gone out, for I well know that servants in general, and, as I am told, those of the

Roman prelates in particular, make falsehood the rule and truth the exception."

The result of the matter was, that after a convenient time—just so much as would make the cardinal's return seem probable—they apprized Farinaccio he might walk in. He did not wait to be twice invited, but entering abruptly; found his eminence seated in all apparent tranquillity, as if receiving a stranger. He was, however, soon forced to lay aside this impassive mask; for Farinaccio, approaching him boldly, thus unceremoniously addressed him:

"Is this, then, your eminence, the faith of the priesthood?"

The cardinal, arguing from the exordium what would be the peroration, cut short his speech, by exclaiming, in a collected, yet somewhat embarrassed voice:

"Signor Prospero, I may tell you that the promise I made of defence was *sub modo*, that is, if the confession of the accused did not turn out so clear and explicit as to render a defence of any kind superfluous. I may also tell you—and I am not alone in my opinion, which is shared by others far my superiors—that I honor those chosen intellects, which, like torches sent by God, light us along the path of rectitude; but, on the other hand, I and my superiors utterly despise advocates, who, perverting their talents, distort with sophistry the right and true; obscure with caviling the simple and plain; and muddy the clear waters to fish therein."

"And does your eminence consider the guilt of the party fully proved?"

"This, Signor Prospero, I do not choose to say: I would only remind you of one fact, which your excellent sense should have already comprehended. My promise was given—as it only could be—*sub conditione* 'hat the

pope would consent. This condition—where an inferior acquiesces in a matter which must eventually be decided on by his superiors—is always virtually understood, if not expressed. Now, if the Supreme Pontiff, the fount of all wisdom, and my master as well as yours, should find it inexpedient to approve my course of action, with what show of justice can you task me with it ?”

“ I was born in Rome, was reared in the Roman Curia, and your eminence should know that these shifting expedients can have no weight with me. I see into them too well. You made me the promise, which, if you could not fulfill, should never have been uttered. Is it not known to all that you are the life and soul of the pontifical counsels, that your august uncle has preferred you to Cardinal Aldobrandini, and that he, affectionate as his nature is, can refuse nothing to you, his well deserving nephew ? I obtained the confession, on condition a defence should be allowed, trusting in certain arguments which I now perceive were altogether misplaced. Let the accused, I entreat you, have the privilege of defence. Otherwise, do you know what will be said in Rome ? That the innocent were betrayed, and that in the capital of the Christian world there is another Judas”

“ You, Signor Prospero ?”

“ Myself.”

“ Your mind, Signor Prospero, seems to be unusually excited ; be calm ; this agitation of spirit might be prejudicial ; be calm, I say.”

Farinaccio was not in a state to listen to advice, nor to heed the indirect threat conveyed by these words, which, if he even noticed it, rather spurred than checked him, for boiling with fury, and his features flushed with anger, he exclaimed :

“ Calm ? and how can I be calm ? I have been led

by the universal corruption of the times into the path of dissolute pleasure, which I have traversed without decency, but without baseness; yet here, within this breast, is one sacred spot where God's voice is audible, and that voice commands me to tell you that Signora Petroni and the Cenci are innocent. Signora Beatrice, though also innocent, confessed the crime at my instigation, backed by the entreaties of her friends, and by virtue of that love which induced Christ to sacrifice himself for the human race. Though she confesses to have murdered the wretch, whom nature herself would blush to call father, I trust no Christian judge will condemn the daughter who heroically saved her chastity. If I fail, I . . . I, myself, will have brought her head to the block; and on my garments, on my hands, your eminence, will be seen the indelible stain of innocent blood. If this be so, then adieu for ever to peace and quiet! All the tears I can shed will never suffice to wash away my remorse and I swear to you on this holy missal, that, to expiate my involuntary crime, I will don the pilgrim's gown, and from Estremadura to Palestine, from Jerusalem to Loretto, will leave behind me neither city, town, nor hamlet, without proclaiming therein the innocence of the Cenci family and the deplorable mistake which caused their death."

"Calm yourself, Signor Prospero. You engage in this business with too much warmth; pardon me for saying so. You cannot be ignorant of the high esteem in which you are held at court, and how gratified we shall be to grant your request, if possible. I will tell you, confidentially, that his holiness has not yet transmitted any order to the Governor of Rome, for the execution of the sentence. In the meantime, I shall endeavor to speak with him, and will humbly implore his consent to let the defence take its course, giving him to understand that my

word is compromised in the matter. Go, and rest assured not a single paper will be touched without informing you. Now, as your sincere friend, permit me to say, that, as I have long been your staunch patron at court, seeking your promotion to some conspicuous post, in which your distinguished talents might avail the State, you should not, of your own accord, frustrate my design, and close the door to elevation, by indulging in imprudent expressions and deportment, nor by raking up certain half forgotten events, which, after all, only weigh you down To cut short the matter, I shall be glad to see you again."

They then separated.

In fact, the cardinal's language gave Farinaccio cause for many reflections, but shaking his head, he rid himself of them, as we are wont to do with snow flakes on our hair, and, proceeding with unfaltering assiduity to his task, assembled his colleagues and informed them of the menaced treason, urging them to enforce their arguments in person before the Pope. Nor did he require great waste of words to prevail upon them, for among the constituents of a college or society, we always find the love of their order to be the predominating principle; and, though naturally faint hearted, the advocates Altieri and De Angelis were most scrupulous upholders of the rational side of a question; incapable, no doubt, they were of undergoing martyrdom, but not the men to abandon, without a warm protest, the cause of justice. They, therefore, agreed to proceed to the Vatican; and since it was rumored that the pope refused to admit any one to a conference on the subject of the Cenci, they determined that De Angelis should present himself as an advocate of the poor, trusting that the pope, unconscious of the part he had taken as one of the defence, would admit him, while his colleagues, seizing the opportunity, would follow in his

train, and all, kneeling at the feet of his holiness, with such arguments as best suited the occasion, would endeavor to procure a confirmation of the promise, made by his nephew, the Cardinal San Giorgio, that the accused Cenci should have the privilege of defence.

The plan was carried out almost to the letter. On their way to the Vatican, they saw returning the carriages of the principal prelates and Roman barons. Drawing an evil augury from the general demeanor and, in some cases, vehement gesticulation of the occupants, they somewhat changed their scheme, resolving to present themselves separately in the antechamber and mingle with the crowd who were waiting for an audience, with a view to remove all suspicion that they were actuated by a common interest. This plan was successful; De Angelis, on being announced, obtained admittance, and as the chamberlain opened the door for him to enter, and before he could recover from his surprise, Altieri and Farinaccio followed their brother advocate, and all knelt down together before the pontiff, who, with darkened face and contracted brow, angrily demanded:

"What is all this? What do these illustrious gentlemen want of me?"

"Your Holiness," replied De Angelis, raising his hands in supplication, "we will not rise from your sacred feet until we receive a confirmation of the favor, already promised by his eminence, Cardinal San Giorgio, to be empowered to defend the cause of the hapless Cenci."

Clement 8th, though outraged to find his preventive measures thwarted, dissembled his wrath, and in an affected tone, said:

"Then Providence has spared us to discover, that not only are there in Rome miscreants who murder their own

fathers, but advocates who scruple not to defend parricides ? ”

De Angelis, overawed, let fall his arms, not daring to utter a syllable. Altieri, to whom the pope's language sounded strangely, was about to reply, when he was anticipated by Farinaccio, who frankly and boldly exclaimed :

“ Most Holy Father, it is somewhat novel to hear one, who was once the pride and ornament of the Roman Curia, designate advocates as the champions of crime. We came not here to defend parricides, but to petition for the confirmation of a promise which is sacred ; still, by means of the defence, we trust to succeed in proving that some of the accused are innocent, others justifiable, and all objects of your Holiness's commiseration. You, Holy Father, consider them guilty, and we bow to your conviction ; we esteem them innocent, and ask as a right that ours be respected ; for the voice of conscience is a heaven-bestowed gift, and in the balance of the Eternal Judge, the consciences of all men have equal weight.”

Farinaccio pronounced these words with much solemnity, and so noble was his manner and attitude, though in a kneeling posture, he seemed like one, seated in the chair of Christ's Apostle, reasoning with the pope, humbled to the dust. The pontiff was thunder-struck, and as no other shift at the moment occurred to him, he said, as if to gain time :

“ Arise ! ” Then lifting his suspicious eyes, he fixed them for an instant on the advocate and asked : “ Are you then the worthy advocate, Prospero Farinaccio ? ”

“ I am he, an undeserving son and subject of your Holiness.”

“ And has his eminence the Cardinal San Giorgio really promised you permission to defend the Cenci ? ”

"He has, most Holy Father."

"Cardinal San Giorgio shall keep his word. Depart in peace."

The pontiff's voice was low and threatening, like the sound of distant thunder—unfailing presage of a tempest: it was therefore that Altieri, apprehensive of having lost ground in his esteem, returned, the moment his colleagues had crossed the threshold, and again kneeling before the pope, said :

"Most Holy Father, deign to bear in mind that I, being still connected with the college of advocates for the poor, could, under no circumstances, refuse to plead the cause of any who asked my assistance."

But the pope, a thorough dissembler, having perfectly recovered his impassability, quietly replied :

"I am not surprised at you, but at the others: however, on second thought, I am convinced they too are worthy men, and zealous champions of this noble ministry."

When Altieri rejoined his colleagues, he found them hand in glove with Cardinal Cinzio, whom on the way they had met and accosted without ceremony, stating that they had just returned from a conference with his holiness, who had shown unmistakable evidences of being well disposed, and declared that he wished his eminence, if he had made a promise, to maintain it; but they were of opinion the cardinal himself should consummate the matter with the pope, while they would await in the antechamber the issue of the interview.

"May you not sin through over-confidence?" asked the cardinal, with an arch smile.

"*More Romano*, your Eminence, *more Romano*; our forefathers derived the word *pignus* (pledge) from *pugnus* (fist,) not feeling themselves secure, without the guarantee in their hands; nor did they trust to second hand

statements, but, in judicial style, required actual living testimony."

The cardinal, with contracted brows, compressed lips and inclined body, entered the pope's closet. He there remained so long as he thought a show of decency required, and then came forth, feigning unbounded joy for having, by virtue of most humble supplications, obtained from the sovereign full permission to fulfill his promise, and, besides, a prorogation of twenty days, that the worthy advocates might with all convenience prepare themselves for the defence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRIAL.

"As a roaring lion, and a raging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people."

PROVERBS xxviii, 15.

THIS is the hall in which one sees the paintings of Raphael, and hears the consultations of the priesthood: this is the hall wherein were discussed and oftentimes decided the destinies of what was called the world's rulers; for power, ere it expired, communicated its flame to craft—as slaves were wont to do in the Lupercal games—and this soon set on fire the four corners of the earth.

When the people—the pinions of the huge eagle, that had eclipsed the sun of liberty, being broken—hoped to warm themselves in its rays, lo! there intervened between man and freedom other shadows, let loose by the keys of Saint Peter the Jew fisherman. But if power be destructible, so also is craft; and if the hilt of the Roman sword were unable to drive the nail into Fortune's wheel, the clerical crosier is certainly unequal to the task. Vengeance, like a spring of subterraneous water, secretly but surely undermines power. From behind the trunk of a tree to the altar of Deity, everywhere and ever, she keeps her bow bent, and, sooner or later, will strike Achilles in the vulnerable part; but craft and fraud waste away by the very exercise of their malice, as the hour glass empties its contents, dropping, grain after grain, the sands that measure time.

Beneath a canopy of crimson velvet, fringed with gold, and elevated above the whole assembly, sat his holiness. A step lower, clad in their gorgeous purple robes, four cardinals were seated ; these were Cinzio Passero, Cardinal of San Giorgio, son of the pope's sister Julia, and Francesco Sforza, Cardinal of San Gregorio in Velatro, who were ranged on one side ; and on the other Pietro Aldobrandini, Cardinal of San Niccolò, son of the pope's brother Pietro, and Cesare Baronio, Cardinal of San Nereo, were seated. Next, filling a broad space in front, sat in conspicuous positions, cardinals and bishops, and every denomination of prelates, distinguished by their mantles of purple or scarlet.

In the center, on the right of the throne, was a bench covered with black cloth, for the auditors of the palace and the Sacred Criminal Ruota, who were now directed by a president *pro tempore*, Luciani himself having fallen ill ; opposite, was a similar bench, occupied by the fiscal procurator, with several chancellors and notaries, and between the two a third bench was placed transversely, for the use of the counsel for the defence.

The Swiss guards, in their steel helmets and cuirasses, with halberds resting on their shoulders, guarded the hall, and thrust back the curious, in a rude and insolent manner. Ah, long standing mixture of pride and humiliation, that the Italian people should be thus necessitated to draw from the North these machines with human faces, to exercise the functions of brute force ! Nor were ladies and gentlemen wanting, decked and garnished in ball attire.

All being seated, and silence commanded by the ushers, the president—permission to proceed having been granted by the pope—waved his right hand to the procurator, intimating that he might commence.

He arose; and while wiping his face with a handkerchief, arranging his hair, and attending to other little niceties affecting his person, let us pause a moment to consider the man. His complexion is the color of saffron; his eyes are lifeless and opaque; he wears his hair smoothed down over one temple, while over the other it hangs like a willow, as if weeping for the brain and heart long since departed; he sways his arms to and fro, like marine telegraphs; now he crouches down into a coil, now springs back, like a wire serpent from a toy box. From a mere glance at the individual, one might readily comprehend that at his birth, petulance, presumption and stupidity led a circling dance around his cradle, and endowed him with a fund, which he afterwards augmented by the addition of hypocrisy.

With much solemnity our fiscal procurator turns up the sleeves of his gown, and then with shrill voice, which gradually rises higher, enters upon his theme: having asserted that he had omitted no scrutiny in examining the process, and had invoked the aid of Him who never withholds it from those who ask sincerely. He went on to state that, at the suggestion of the devil, and stimulated by a fiendish spirit of cupidity, persons, not his enemies, nor strangers to him, plotted the murder of Count Francesco Cenci, a man of renowned piety, illustrious lineage, and splendid learning: he then spoke of the mandate given to the assassins, Olimpio and Marzio, of the treacherous dream, and the postponement of the parricide, on account of the feast of the blessed Virgin: he depicted the horror of the murderers, the fearful menaces of the girl to overcome their repugnance, the nail driven and redriven, the corpse dragged by the hair along the floor, and then, with barbarous ferocity, precipitated from the balcony: he referred to the concurrent confessions of the accused, which, thanks

to salutary tortures, were clear and undeniable proofs : he expatiated on the horror of the Christian world, scandalized to hear that in Rome, the great metropolis of our holy religion, in the very shade of Christ's vicar's throne, such awful deeds of wickedness could be perpetrated. What more ? Taking advantage of a superstitious weakness, then quite prevalent, he declared that the sun itself was darkened through fear, when, on the contrary, it never shone more brightly than in those days ; and that the affrighted waters of the Tiber flowed back to their source, when any observer could see they were pursuing their way, as usual, in the direction of Ostia. Finally, apostrophising the crucifix suspended from the wall, he counseled the judges to remember His divine precept, that the tree incapable of bearing good fruit must be cut down and cast into the fire, and that, in the case before them, the fruit was of the worst and most deadly kind. " There are some, oh ! gentlemen of the Ruota," added he, " who seek to tamper with your religious feelings, by drawing your attention to the youth of some of the culprits, as if this, instead of extenuating the crime, did not call loudly for greater rigor. If the accused, at so tender an age, showed themselves capable of such abominable wickedness, what might not be expected from them when grown to manhood ? Why, compared with these offenders, the household of Atreus was but a convent of Capuchins ! " He concluded with a labored harangue, in which he pictured the soul of the illustrious Count Cenci, violently expelled from life, without the consolation of the sacraments, and perhaps condemned to penal fire, pictured it standing on the threshold of hell, shaking its hoary, blood-clotted hair, and with uplifted hands towards the judges, imploring for " Vengeance ! Vengeance ! "

Among the most miserable of employments, may surely

be numbered that of procurator ! And why is it sought, why exercised ? For bread. But how much more honorable is the bread sweetened by honest toil ? How much less iniquitous is that moistened with the tears of the wretch condemned to hard labor ? Your fiscal procurators, caterers for the scaffold, should feed on the relics of the execution ! Is there much difference between them and the executioner ? Certainly, if there be any, it is to the advantage of the latter. Stranger both to pride and cowardice, he decapitates with steel those wretches whom the fiscal procurator has just assassinated with his tongue. God will one day judge them ; and, for my part, I think the punishment of the former will be light in comparison with that of the latter.

First appeared for the defence Altieri, who pleaded the cause of Lucretia Petroni, and with winning gravity, spoke to the following effect : “ He rejoiced, as well for his own honor as for that of his profession, that he was not forced to startle the judges with images drawn from hell ; that, on the contrary, it devolved on him to invite their attention to a pious and gentle matron, and raise the cry, not of ‘ vengeance,’ which, reprehensible in all places and before every assemblage of Christians, was especially so in the presence of Christ’s vicar and of pious, excellent judges, ‘ but the cry alone worthy to be heard in the judgment hall,’ ‘ Justice ! Justice ! ’ ”

Searching in the process for the moving causes of the crime, he showed that none of those pointed out by the procurator could attach to Lucretia Petroni. “ Cupidity could not have influenced her, for she had nothing to hope from the death of her husband, since it was universally known Count Cenci had made a will, disinheriting all his relatives of whatever degree or kindred ; her avaricious desires, therefore, if she had any, could not hope to be

gratified. Nor could rancor have urged her to commit the crime, for since, when young and beautiful, she had suffered many slights and offences from her cruel husband without open resentment, it was assuredly most unlikely she should thirst to avenge them after so long a lapse of time, and this, too, when they had ceased, and she had entered upon that decline of life when the blood flows more languidly through the veins, and the promptings of the soul, even in restless natures, assume a milder tone. If her husband's cruelties, I speak not of his breaches of conjugal faith, had continued, Donna Lucretia, by appealing to the tribunals, might have procured a divorce, which, though not a rupture of the matrimonial tie, is granted so far as regards dwelling apart : nor was she wanting in the support of most powerful kindred ; nor, provided as she was with a large dowry, did the fear of pecuniary need or scanty subsistence induce her to cling to her husband. Much less should we accept the suggestions of the devil as a moving cause, since, though all of us are exposed to the temptations of the adversary, our holy religion teaches that souls of fervent piety are either exempt from them altogether, or triumph over their assault. Now, what woman was ever reputed more devout than Lucretia ? The procurator, though intending the contrary, testifies to the piety of Lucretia, when he pretends that the murder of Francesco Cenci was postponed from respect to the feast of the blessed Virgin ; but I would have him to know that a woman, penetrated with such religious zeal, would offend, neither on the day of her festival, nor at any other time, the mother of every mercy, the mediatrix of every pardon."

And here the advocate either deceived himself, or strove to deceive others, for experience has shown and still shows that with sincere devotion are frequently

associated evil suggestions. Let one instance suffice: that of Jacques Clement, the murderer of Henry 3d, who prepared himself for the crime with the consolation of the Eucharist and the most solemn observances of our religion. It seems certainly out of place to use the word *devotion* in such an iniquitous sense; but let it serve to admonish us that there are two kinds of devotion, one encircling the moral being with a crown of truly pious and generous deeds, and the other, the companion of crime, twining like a poisonous vine around the cross—an accursed thing. Of the latter there are many, too many examples; and instead of eradicating, the priesthood, through ignorance, or mistake, or self interest, foster it with every care. Whether I speak truly or not, may be learned from the ancient tariff of the Roman Curia, which specifies the conditions of pardon for any and every crime.

Altieri proceeded to examine, clause by clause, the process, laboring with subtle industry to expose its irregularities, as well as the incongruities of the depositions and weakness of the evidence. He concluded with an appeal to the consciences of the judges. "Can you," said he, "consent to see a lady so universally esteemed, so bountiful a benefactress of the poor, infamously doomed to the ax of the executioner? Even now her mortal spark begins to expire! Extinguish it not in such a tempest! Oh, God! But one moment, and grief and years may cloud it in eternal gloom. Ah! Let it go out in peace!"

De Angelis next rose in defence of Don Giacomo; he also sought to repel the allegations of the procurator, and showed how actual narrowness of circumstances could not have stimulated him to commit the crime, since his father, in consequence of a just order from the sover-

eign pontiff, afforded him the means of honorable maintenance ; besides which, he enjoyed the interest of his wife's dowry ; in all, amply sufficient to defray his family expenses. Much less could the hope of succeeding as sole heir to his father's property have induced him to commit the atrocious parricide, for it was bruited about, and Count Cenci himself declared it unreservedly, that he had disinherited his son of his unincumbered estates, which the event has but too truly proved, but could not deprive him of the entailed property. He continued by observing that Count Cenci was advanced in years, and already arrived at that extreme stage of life, when any light shock might be fatal ; hence Giacomo should be esteemed not only impious, but insane, if, by so vile and dangerous a crime, he anticipated an event, which, in due course of nature, must soon have happened. " What semblance of probability is there in the assertion that the son was tranquil and patient while his father enjoyed vigorous health, and after he entered into green old age ; but became intolerant of delay so soon as he grew weak and decrepid ? Don Giacomo, a stranger to luxurious pleasures and loathing the vices that contaminate the world, an unimpeachable gentleman, a good husband and father, how could he so suddenly display a ferocious disposition, surpassing that of the fiercest animals ? Is it likely that, in the infancy of crime, even he could have sprung into a giant, and with one bound measured the whole career which the most abandoned men require several stages to effect ? This is not consonant with nature ; and every thing antagonistic to the eternal laws of truth should be either at once rejected, or, at most, admitted with great hesitation. And in this case," resumed the advocate with increased vehemence, " I consider that quite an opposite course of reasoning has been pursued, and that the cir-

cumstances of the crime, the more remotely they diverge from the natural channel, the more willingly they are accepted ; and the more they clash with the laws of humanity and reason, the more they are welcomed. This is all wrong. Don Giacomo—and this fact, though of great weight, the procurator did not allude to—was absent from Rocca Petrella and residing in Rome, when the murder was perpetrated. It is therefore very evident he could not have participated in the actual crime. And if, as the procurator insinuates, he coöperated in the murder by means of letters or messages, where are these letters and messages ? why does he not produce them ? The confession of the accused is the main support of the accusation. For myself, after long reflection, I am convinced that confession, being contrary to nature and opposed to moral instinct, should have no weight in the balance of justice. Indeed, with what show of charity, or sound sense, can a man be compelled to accuse himself ? The individual who subscribes to his own misfortune, or plots his own ruin is, and ever has been, reputed insane ; and if the church concedes sepulture *in sacris* to those hopeless men who destroy themselves, it is precisely because she considers them deranged. Now, I ask you, does not the accusing one's self of a crime deserving capital punishment argue also insanity ? It undoubtedly does, and proves that the tongue may kill even better than the hands. Here, however, I am met by the objection that the confession is not spontaneous, but extorted, by force of torture. Good God ! An admirable rejoinder truly ! A time will come, when posterity will wonder how we, their forefathers, could be so barbarous as to accept for an instrument of truth, what was only evidence of delusion and ferocity."

A murmur of disapprobation ran through the hall ;

and Farinaccio himself, pulling his colleague by the cloak, admonished him in a whisper to be silent on that subject. Cardinal Baronio, one of the most learned men of his time, observed in a low voice to Cardinal Aldobrandini, who, judging from his features, appeared scandalized beyond measure,

"These blessed advocates, when once they have got well started, shed such tears as belong neither to heaven nor earth."

"And I should like them to tell me," replied the other, "how, without the *strappado*, we could get at the truth. Pray, why are these prattlers permitted thus to outrage the wisdom of the greatest doctors? At this rate, I ask your eminence, what is to become of authority? Why have not the judges called him to order?"

"Let us leave, your eminence, talking to them, so long as they leave acting to us. When they shall presume to clip our wings, *on avisera*, as the kings of France did when the chambers refused to register their edicts."

De Angelis now tacked about and, like Altieri, undertook with subtle argument to demolish the unwieldy bulk of the process, plunging at the same time into a nicety of abstraction which wearied the minds of his auditors and lessened the efficacy of his discourse. He at length closed, by calling to mind the remote lineage and noble blood of the Cenci, and, with happier tact, the disconsolate wife and children of Don Giacomo. Addressing the judges, "You," said he, "should reflect deeply before tainting so noble a family with the indelible stain of infamy; you should consider that no woman would bestow her hand on the son of a parricide, no human heart would be open to him: converted, as he would be, and not by his own fault, into an object of horror rather than commis-

eration, to insult him would be even esteemed an act of justice and duty; the houses of men would be closed against him, and in the very church they would fly from his presence. And to you likewise, Sovereign Father of the universe of man! allow me to present the picture of a wretched wife and mourning children: in my hands, which I now imploringly raise before your august throne, deign to contemplate the hands of four children and a mother; and to hear in my voice the shrieks of these innocent beings, who, with tears and sobs, put their trust in you, after God above, for mercy and pardon."

"Your eminence," said Cardinal Sforza to Cardinal Cinzio, "here is your handkerchief, which I have just picked up, it will serve to dry your tears."

"My tears? I am not forced to weep."

"However, the advocate's discourse strikes me as very touching; the peroration was quite happy."

"Ha! *chacun a son gout*, your eminence. As for myself, when I confront it with the precepts of Aristotle and Quintilian, it seems the flimsiest amplification that could possibly proceed from a student of rhetoric, and this too without taking into account the judicial heresies he has enunciated, particularly that famous one against confession obtained *per vine tortura*. But hush! Farinaccio is getting on his feet. Let us see what run this Arabian will make of it! The prize is four heads. How much will you wager he does not lose?"

"You leave no room for betting, your eminence. How can my conviction differ from yours?"

Cardinal Cinzio suspiciously scrutinized Sforza's countenance; but the latter, an old courtier, revealed about as much in his features, as a miser would of his coffers.

Farinaccio arose, and casting a glance of ineffable con-

tempt upon the procurator, spoke in a sonorous voice, as follows :

“ May God assist me ! I know not, in commencing this discourse, whether surprise or sorrow has gained the mastery over me, but this I know, that both passions now exercise violent sway, for, before entering on the duties of defender, I am forced to pass in review those of the accuser. The fiscal procurator, if ancient doctrines be not now-a-days out of date, as upholder of laws for the protection of mankind, should proceed in his arguments rigorously but without rancor, energetically but without fury, acutely but without deception ; and whoever acts otherwise, I tell him to his teeth he usurps the office of executioner. How, therefore, can I recognise the law’s upholder in a magistrate furious as the pythoness on her tripod, when convulsed by the demon ? How recognise him, when he deduces from facts certain consequences, maliciously sophistical ? How recognise him who alters and distorts these facts, supposes some that are unreal, and imagines others that have no existence ? Start not from your seat, my worthy procurator ! What I have asserted I mean to prove.

“ You dared describe Count Francesco Cenci as a model, left by God’s goodness on the earth, a living testimony of the present existence of the golden age ; and you scoured the classics in search of goodly gems, with which to shape a diadem of virtue for your hero. Oh, shame, where is thy blush ? Francesco Cenci religious ! He certainly inaugurated sacred images, but only to blaspheme them ; he built and restored temples, but to profane them ; and dug graves, but to inter therein. Had God granted his daily prayer, all his children would have died before himself. Assuredly, he was a devout man, for he gave a banquet on the day he heard of his children’s death at Salamanca ;

a most pious man, when, filling his goblet with wine, he exclaimed, that were it his children's blood he would drink to God with greater devotion than in the sacred liquor of the Eucharist. These monstrosities are not the creatures of my brain, for they are in the mouths of men, attested by prelates and barons, worthy of all honor, who were present as guests at this horrid feast. Who did not know him? You all knew him, and know full well the quality and measure of his imputed crimes. Let us, too, gentlemen, inquire a little into the career of this individual, as a man of letters! What volumes, the fruit of 'study' by the midnight lamp,' has he left behind, for the instruction of posterity? I will tell you; his diary, in which, with a presumption equal to his wickedness, he recorded his daily delinquencies. Nor were his sanguinary deeds—I speak of matters known to all—the most nefarious in his long catalogue of crime. Those ties, which the human heart most yearns for in this earthly pilgrimage as a solace amid the cares of life, he scrupled not to form: but he was a friend, only to become a traitor; he feigned himself a lover the better to seduce innocence, and to leave his victim in despair; he became a husband, to commit adultery; a father, to commit incest. These ties he formed for the fiendish pleasure of severing them; he even studied the Roman laws to transgress and the divine to outrage them. Had Francesco Cenci not existed, we should have believed that Suetonius had dipped his pen in the gall of calumny, when he wrote the life and character of the Emperor Tiberius. It was Cenci's lot to prove to mankind, that the inhuman practices of Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Caracalla, and of whatever other monsters God in his wrath has sent forth as scourges on the world, were capable of being equaled; aye, surpassed. Such was Francesco Cenci, and if I have calumniated his memory, may his

soul present itself this instant on the judgement throne, and give me the lie. Oh, ill starred soul, wherever thou mayst sojourn, lend me thine ear ! Leaving to others the charge of witnessing against thee in the presence of God, I here, before His most holy vicar, proclaim thee the most perfidious and infamous wretch that ever appeared on earth."

The procurator, as if it were no business of his, occupied himself in inspecting his nails; while Cardinal Sforza whispered to San Giorgio :

"It seems the Arabian has made a good start of it."

But his companion heard him not, for just then, after a series of silent arguments, he had come to this conclusion : "He must be for us or against us."

Meanwhile, Farinaccio continued :

"Behold this corpse, the throat cut, a fearful gash ! Who is he ? A father. Who killed him ? His daughter ; who, without changing countenance, confesses the deed ; and asserts, besides, if she had not done it then, she would now. And who is this girl of atrocious thoughts, and deeds still more atrocious ? There she is ; behold her ! a maiden, whose face seems formed by angel's hands, that we might possess here on earth the type of celestial purity. Innocence might kiss her lips and say, 'my sister.' Like gentleness herself she speaks, like her, she smiles. Not one but extols her virtues, for she has relieved the sorrows of many, has sympathized with those of all. What, then, could have impelled this gentle girl to perpetrate so execrable a deed ! The procurator will tell you it was the arch fiend. Oh ! could his sable majesty have seen her, he would have adored her as an angel, and over angels he has no power. Fiscal procurators are exempt, beyond all question, from such adoration, for no one, not even themselves, ever re-

garded them in the light of angels. Let us, however, leave the fiend to himself, and turn our attention to more human topics. Perhaps cupidity impelled her? At sixteen, the gentle girl dreams as much of money, as does the nightingale, that fills the vales with its melody; as does the butterfly, that bathes its wings in the sunshine of May. At sixteen, the girl's heart is but one outpouring of love for heaven and earth: these two affections are blended together in her soul, since her first earthly passion ever attracts to itself something divine. But, supposing lust of wealth took root in her heart, how could this have urged her to commit the crime? The large income she derived from her mother could neither be curtailed nor wrested from her by her father: and it would have been folly in her to hope to obtain the whole or part of her father's unentailed inheritance, for it was not at all likely that Francesco Cenci, whose only aim in life appeared to be to deprive his children of goods and reputation, and, if possible, of life itself, would have shown compassion to her alone; and it would have been worse than madness for the Signora Beatrice to expect the entailed property of her house" (and here he raised his voice) "as property of this kind, according to the common consent of lawyers, cannot, for any cause or pretext, neither for felony, high treason, nor parricide, be extorted from his legitimate successors male, in the male line."

The aged pontiff at these words bent his head, while his eyes shone from beneath his bushy brows, like flames through a hedge of briars. Cardinal San Giorgio looked askance at the pope. Both seemed to say:

"This man must be made one of us."

"Happy Olimpia!" resumed the advocate, "to have found, through the intervention of the father of the faithful, a friend who, by honorable marriage, saved thee from

the impious designs of thy parent ! Heaven withheld such good fortune from Beatrice ; her feeble voice was lost amid the stormy uproar of the times, the clash of arms, and the shouts of triumph for recovered Ferrara. Of her petition, which, in the depth of her affliction, she addressed to the sovereign pontiff, there exists no trace in the Equity Court, if you except the registry of the day when it was filed, and the testimony of the official who received it. Thus those outlets of escape were closed to her, which were opened to others : the sole destiny which now awaited the unfortunate girl was to be left in utter abandonment, exposed, like another Andromeda, on the rock of necessity, to be devoured by monsters, more cruel than that overcome by Perseus.

“ It is for me a loathsome task to recount the atrocities committed by Count Cenci against his daughter, Beatrice. Ah ! Why did not Nature endow me with a heart and understanding like those she lavished on the procurator, that I might revel in exhibiting the shameful language with which the base old man insulted the chaste ears of Beatrice, and the impieties with which he sought to taint her virginal soul. In vain were the flatteries and indecencies, the wild bursts of rage and madness, the vile prisons and long fastings ; in vain the affrighted slumbers, the weary watchings, the blows, wounds and blood with which he strove to vanquish her !

“ We behold a corpse, with its throat cut ; we are horrified at the sight ; it is that of an old man . . . a father, stabbed by his own daughter : no one denies it, not even herself ! Even my frame shakes, and my teeth chatter with icy horror ; but let us proceed, let us take courage, let us dare investigate what this man was before he became a corpse. Softly opening, like a thief in the night, the door of the chamber where moaned his desolate

daughter, his otherwise nude body enveloped in a gown, he approaches her bed : she sleeps, yet weeps ; for to the miserable, sleep is not even a friend. Shading the lamp, which the virgin kept lighted before the image of the Mother of purity, he removes the bed clothes and exposes the limbs that nature renders sacred to a father's eyes. If one there be in this assembly, who bears a paternal heart in his bosom, let him follow me in spirit and behold the sacrilegious wretch, with satyr face and eyes inflamed, behold him stoop and touch with tremulous hands, the body of the virgin, and . . . Beatrice feels the cold, clammy skin of the reptile creeping over her flesh ; she awakes . . . what will she do ? What will she do ? Had she been as impious and abject as her father, you would then have heard very different versions of the procurator's eclipses of the sun, and backward flows of the Tiber to its source. I, oh ! fathers, have presented this spectacle to your eyes and not in vain. . . . Answer me, would you have wished, Beatrice . . . impious . . . abject, unlike a Roman virgin, or unhappy, miserable, as she now is ? Beatrice looked misfortune in the face, and hailed it as a messenger from God . . . she thrust home the steel, and rescued her name from infamy. Deploring, as we do, this extreme necessity, we must still admire the heroic girl, who, in other days, would have been honored with a triumph by that Rome, which has just racked her with torture, and now threatens her with an ignominious death.

“The God-like Emperor Adrian ordained that the penalty for parricide should not be inflicted in cases wherein the son killed his father, or *vice versa*, for any of the fourteen reasons contained in the *Ruthentica* ; *ut cum appellatione cognoscitur*. True, the emperor refers to the murder of the son by the father, on account of the adultery of the former with his step mother, or father's con-

cubine ; but, according to the ablest legal authorities, the spirit of this law extends likewise to any other case of gross ingratitude ; not that the crime should escape with perfect impunity, but be awarded a lighter penalty than capital punishment.

“ Am I required to impress upon your minds how heinous is the offence of incest with one’s own child ? Do you believe an adultery committed with one’s stepmother or father’s concubine comparable to this ? Do you imagine it should be classed with the other cases of ingratitude, as, for instance, the non-redemption of the father by the son, the former being a slave ; or the refusal of the latter to support his parent in poverty ? I will leave to the procurator his solar eclipses and backward flows of rivers to their source, and, in proof of the heinousness of the offence, remind you of the divine Aristotle, in his history of animals : yes, a very brute once immolated himself, for such a violation of nature !

“ From the remotest antiquity, in every period of man’s social existence, impunity was granted to the unfortunate, rather than the guilty individual, who, to avoid incest, killed his or her parent ; as we read of Semiramis, killed by her son Ninus, while she sought his amorous embraces ; of Cianne, who slew her father Cianno, because he had polluted her ; of Medulina, who, ravished by her drunken parent, mercilessly took his life ; and of Orestes we read that, having slain his mother for a less cogent motive than those I have just mentioned, he was condemned by one half the judges and acquitted by the other half, and that the casting vote in his favor was given by the goddess of wisdom, who thus saved the son of Agamemnon. I quote this last example, which is rather fable than fact, to convince you, that the most intellectual men of Greece believed the Supreme intelligence, which sprang full

grown and armed from the brain of Jove, concurred in the verdict, that a son, who slew his mother in revenge, however tardy, of his father's murder, was more deserving of pity than punishment.

“ The first law in the final paragraph of the Digest *de sicariis*, expressly declares that one is exempt from legal rigor, who kills a person for rape committed against one's self or relations ; and even where the act is not consummated, the law *Isti quidem quod metus causa* informs us that imminent danger of rape justifies one in slaying the person who threatens it, provided no other alternative is at hand. Thank God, I am not in want of numerous instances which tend to excuse the criminal. We read in Valerius Maximus that Caius Marius acquitted Plotius, declaring him justified in killing his nephew to save himself from contamination ; and Virginus was decreed guiltless for stabbing his daughter to rescue her from the lust of Appius. Hence, for still more powerful reasons, should Beatrice Cenci be justified, reduced as she was to more straitened necessity. Insane, to use no harsher term, is the argument of the procurator, that Beatrice should have accused, not slain, her father. I have already mentioned that she addressed letters to persons in high places, beseeching them to save her from imminent peril. On the day of the banquet, she supplicated with this view the guests, who were horror-struck at Cenci's ferocious conduct. She finally petitioned the pontifical throne. Because, hapless one, she could raise her voice no higher ; because she was immured in a profound dungeon, with doors well barred, and guards strictly vigilant, would you find her guilty ? Would you inculcate the suppliant girl, because your ears, ringing with the joyous sounds of victory, could not hear the moans of misfortune ? God help us ! This would seem like a precedent to acquit hence-

forth the thief, and punish the plundered man, because forsooth, he did not secure his property with sufficient bars and bolts!

"And on the supposition that the procurator has taken a right view of the subject, the Signora Beatrice, having killed and not accused her father, would incur only the penalty of exportation, in accordance with the legal precept of the Emperor Adrian; and not that of capital punishment.

"The procurator likewise errs when he maintains that my arguments are of avail only in cases of actual seduction, and not when a certain lapse of time intervenes between the seduction and the murder, and the offender is killed by the sufferer's own hand, not by assassins.

"He errs, I say, because the Signora Beatrice openly confesses that she killed her father with her own hand, and that too at the very moment he was about to commit the crime; and mind you, forcibly and suddenly awakened, in her wild frenzy of fright and rage, she probably did not recognize her own father. But let us admit she did recognize him . . . your pardon, gentlemen, for profaning that holy name! for can Francesco Cenci be called 'Father,' without outraging nature and insulting those worthy the appellation? When a miscreant breaks down the barrier interposed by God and Nature between parent and child, when he neither protects nor loves, but on the contrary hates and persecutes his offspring, he ceases to be a father; the greater his obligation to protect and love, the greater his crime for violating it, and the more deserving is he of death. And allowing, by way of hypothesis, for I deny it as fact, that the Signora Beatrice murdered the wretch, not in the act but afterwards, she would be punishable with exportation, not by decapitation. It is a universal dogma of lawyers, that the

first outrage felt for an offence received modifies the penalty for subsequent murder, though a long time may intervene between the events. And in this city, before this very tribunal, we meet with examples that tend to mitigation of punishment, in consideration of the sex's frailty, though no righteous cause or pretext be adduced to extenuate the crime. And can I believe that merciless rigor will be exercised in the present instance, in the case of a beautiful, and what is of far greater significance, an innocent girl?

"But alas! in addition to her innocence, let us take into account her brief sixteen years of existence, which hardly admit of planning, much less enacting, atrocious deeds. The orator Hypperides, when he exhibited the graces of the accused whom he defended, so softened the hearts of the judges they dared not condemn her; and oh! why is not the Signora Beatrice now present before me, that I might point you to that brow, smoothed by the finger of God, where candor and innocence are enthroned, and which seems, in proudest accents, as if conscious of purity, to exclaim: 'Imprint here, if ye dare, one mark of infamy!'

"But whither have I strayed? Whither have I been borne along by the desire to save this noble girl? I return to the beaten path. I repent of having implored pity. I accuse myself for having entreated mercy, not that it is ever unseasonable to appeal to the sentiments of humanity, but because I believe, in the case of Beatrice Cenci, the appeal is needless; her cause speaks for itself. When we shall have all passed away, and even the dust of our relics be scattered into air, when our times and deeds shall be buried in oblivion, the name of Beatrice will send a thrill through the hearts of all then living; and as the buoy floating on the surface of the water indi-

cates that the anchor lies at the bottom, so Beatrice, the sole survivor in the record of fame, of all now in existence here, shall recall these inglorious years irrevocably engulfed in the abyss of the past. Since she will stamp a name and character on your age, it devolves on you, oh Judges, to decide, whether its memory shall be pleasing or abhorrent to after times.

"Alas ! let it not be said that here in Rome, the metropolis of the Catholic world, the courtesan obtained a shrine in the Pantheon, while Beatrice, the most heroic of virgins, was executed ; that immodesty and licentiousness found divine honors, and purity and chastity a bloody grave. Oh ! had I but the authority of Scipio, that, imitating his example, I could exclaim this moment : ' In this month, in these days last year, a Roman maid, casting aside the weakness and timidity of her sex, bravely defended her chastity. More virtuous than Lucretia, less unfortunate than Virginia, may her name survive, the pride and glory of Latin women ! ' But why any longer discuss her guilt or innocence ? Let us hasten, oh judges, defenders and people ! to the Vatican, and let us thank God for having reserved the noble girl for our own times ! "

He then spoke briefly of Bernardino.

" In God's truth, I was nigh forgetting him ; and in fact the accusation requires no defence. Good God ! To suppose a boy, twelve years of age, an accomplice in the parricide ! Whether we accept the asseveration of the procurator, which is false, or the confession of Beatrice, which is true, we shall still find the accusation absurd. If Beatrice, impelled by a sudden impulse of the soul, stabbed the accursed wretch, she certainly needed neither counselors nor accomplices. If, on the contrary, as the procurator pretends, the murder of Count Cenci was per-

petrated by hired assassins, why make Bernardino a participant? Perhaps for counsel sake? Certainly, twelve years of existence could hardly have fitted one to minister advice in matters of parricide. True, the great Mirandola, on account of his precocious acquirements, was hailed in his twelfth year, as the *phœnix of geniuses*; but that he was capable of offering counsel in so atrocious a deed as murder is something so monstrous it would have made Satan himself tremble on his infernal throne. Perhaps it was physical assistance he rendered? Ha! the strength of a boy of twelve would surely have been a small acquisition to the athletic muscles of two assassins reared in the Abruzzi. I should fear to insult you, were I to dwell longer on this subject. Let his accusation be ranked among the horrid visions that man, intoxicated with the spectacle of human crimes, sometimes dreams of, as he dozes on the judgement seat."

He thus closed his defence. Whether owing to Farnaccio's effective language, or the boldness of his bearing, or his sonorous voice and commanding delivery, certain it is, his hearers were deeply impressed by this discourse, which differs only from the original in being pruned of many of its redundancies and frivolities, and more especially of its metaphors; retaining, however, enough of its marked peculiarities, to make it serve as a sample of the forensic eloquence of that day. A deep, concentrated murmur passed from mouth to mouth, and but for the respect due the pontiff, or the fear inspired by the Swiss guard, the hall would have rung again with acclamations.

After long suspense, a rumor began to prevail that the sentence would not be proclaimed till late at night. Thereupon the audience withdrew, some in hope, some in apprehension, all, however of one mind in their prayers to

the Madonna del Buonconsiglio, that she would graciously inspire the hearts of the judges with righteousness.

Farinaccio, intoxicated by his own eloquence, not less than by the eulogies lavished on him from all sides, and confiding, if reason swayed, in the favorable issue of the cause, spent, according to custom, the better part of the night with his reckless companions and women of ill fame, never tiring of extolling to the skies the chastity, fortitude and beauty of the Roman virgin, while—what at first may appear strange, but on second thought is found wholly compatible with human nature—these licentious men and women proudly celebrated the virtue of Beatrice, as though they had constituted her the repository of their own evil or ruined reputations. Returning home very late, a domestic handed Prospero a packet bearing the papal arms, which had been brought about midnight by a servant of the palace. It was precisely at that hour the destiny of the Cenci had been decided; he opened it in breathless haste, hoping it might contain the acquittal of the accused; but he was disappointed. It was a bull of the pope, creating him Consultor of the Sacred Roman Ruota, with the prerogatives, honorary and stipendiary, belonging to the office. The document, couched in the vague grandiloquence and state platitudes of the tribunal, lauded not only the ability but even the virtues of the new consultor.

“Better so,” exclaimed Farinaccio; “it is not what I expected, but it augurs well. Had I been unacceptable to his holiness, he would not have cared to give me this splendid token of his complaisance.”

In this belief, he found on the desired pillow sweet sleep.

Three hours after midnight the judges are assembled

in the same hall, where the pleaders had harangued. A single candelabrum, shaded with a circle of dark silk, stands on the center of the table. All are in their seats, and with subdued voices begin to address each other. The dim light half illuminates, half obscures the dawning development of a catastrophe they dread. Already is it born in their souls, yet are they awed at the thought of revealing it in their countenances. Nevertheless the hour, the scene, still ringing with Farinaccio's eloquence, and the voice of conscience, ever audible, all inclined them to pity. Suddenly, the president cast his eye on a document, which, regarding it as a part of the process, had hitherto escaped his notice; he opens, reads it, and, while his face changed from pale to ghastly white, passes it with trembling hand to his colleague beside him, and this to the next, and so on, until, having made the round of the table, it returns to the president. The tremor and pallor he experiences strike, like electric sparks, into the veins and features of his associates. Absorbed in the same thought, they sit with drooping heads and eyes fixed on the red carpet. A yoke of iron seems to press upon their necks.

This document seemed to possess the virtue ascribed to Medusa's head; it had petrified every man. Indeed, it was enough to convert into stone every heart of flesh; for it contained the sentence which doomed the whole Cenci family to death. Lucretia, Beatrice, and Bernardino were to be beheaded, Giacomo crushed with a club, and all tortured with red hot pincers, and quartered. The whole property of the Cenci family was likewise to be confiscated, and that in favor of the Apostolic Chamber.

Long and awful was the silence. One could hear the

crackling of the candles as they consumed away; the sand in the hour glass dropping, grain by grain; the very gnawing of the worm in the rafters of the hall. It was the silence of death.

"Are my judges, then, faint hearted?"

This startling voice astounded these public hirelings. Whence did it come? The eye could distinguish neither whence nor from whom it proceeded. Amid the dusky shadows at the far extremity of the hall a man was heard moving his heavy limbs. Doubtless, from him issued the voice, and so the judges seemed to think; for all, rising from their seats, fixed their eyes in that direction. And who was he? The sceptered priest, the Vicar of Christ the Redeemer. Who else in Rome would have dared to speak of death?

The president in despair grasped the pen; shuddering, he dipped it in the ink, which looked to him like blood; shuddering, he signed the document, and moved it towards his neighbor, who, with the others, likewise affixed their signatures. They signed and departed. Clement 8th with labored steps descended from the throne, approached the table, extended his gouty hand to the sentence, and placed it like a poniard in his bosom.

The judges separated in silence. Through the darkness of the night they hastened to their homes, like thieves apprehensive of falling in with the police. Each and all received the price of blood. Not one evinced the shame of Judas by returning the money to the high priest; not one his remorse, by hanging himself on the first tree in his way. They lived and died, detested and self detesting, flattered by those who had need of their aid, and, when dead, buried beneath marble slabs—far more imposing than that which covered for so many years the remains

of Torquato Tasso—which bore testimony, in deep sculptured characters, to their stern integrity as magistrates, their worth as citizens, and nobleness as men!

These judges have long since been judged. Let us leave them to their fate, undeserving as they are even a malediction.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CONFESSION.

"With pious prayer the friar sought to soothe
In her last hours the pure, forsaken one ;
And lifting up his hands to heaven, blessed,
And all absolved her from her mortal sins."

GROSSI.

THE pope nestled the sentence like a poniard in his bosom, and like an assassin awaited the time and place to use it. The complaints of the people, loud as the billows of the deep, reached him at the Vatican ; but, like a skillful politician, he resolved to postpone the execution until this popular commotion had somewhat subsided.

While thus anxiously awaiting the fitting occasion, lo ! fortune placed one in his hands, than which he could have devised none better, nor more opportune. Francesco Cenci, as he himself often wished, was not only fatal to his family in life, but seemed actually to stretch forth his hand from the grave to clutch his relatives, and drag them down to bear him company. Paolo Santa Croce, allied to the Cenci family, of whom we made mention in the opening of this dolorous story, unalterable in his determination to kill his mother, Donna Costanza, had not hitherto found a safe opportunity to put it into execution. It now happened that the unfortunate lady retired to Subiaco, in hopes of restoring her health in the exhilarating air of the country. Apprised of this, Don Paolo proceeded thither, presented himself to his mother, and mercilessly stabbed her with repeated thrusts of a dagger. Then, gathering

together the better part of the valuables on the estate of Oriolo, he fled the justice of man, but not that of God ; for history informs us that a short time afterwards he met a miserable death. This atrocity filled Rome with wonder and alarm ; and the pope, turning it to his own account, resolved on rigorous measures. Meanwhile, he issued orders for the arrest of Don Onofrio, Marquis of Oriolo, Paolo's brother, and his suspected accomplice. Don Onofrio was arrested and condemned to death, although nothing more resulted from the trial than the fact of his having written his brother, that if what he had reported was true, concerning his mother's low and depraved conduct, he should act like a knight. The Orsini family, powerful from their influence and wealth, having, on the deaths of the Santa Croces, a claim upon the feud of Oriolo, were loud in extolling the pope for his salutary rigor ; and they, also, drew along in their train no small number of the nobility. These fulsome eulogies reached their climax, when the Apostolic Chambers, without opposition, agreed that the aforesaid feud should devolve on the Orsini, with the crafty design of avoiding any imputation of cupidity, and to pave the way for the realization of the Cenci property, to which the Aldobrandini aspired. Cardinal San Giorgio, on his part, plotting covertly, circulated artful reports to appal the already too terrified citizens. No father, nor mother, it was said, was now safe within their domestic walls. Every tie of nature was dissolved. It was dangerous to rear children, dangerous to nurse them, and more dangerous still to keep them at home when adult. The universal dread assumed a thousand voices and aspects. Even Father Fanobi, Master of the Novices in the Jesuit College, declared that parents now ran the risk of falling asleep alive, and *awaking* murdered.

The passions of the people, however, gradually receded from the height they had attained, and sunk finally into utter listlessness. Popular compassion had followed Beatrice to the very threshold of her prison ; before its closed doors it mounted guard, and watched till it became weak and weary, and then lay down to sleep. But sympathy varies with the objects presented to its notice or claiming its considerate care, and that which immediately interests it is apt to render it oblivious for the time of all others. The heart of man is called upon to sympathize with so many misfortunes, that it cannot devote itself for any long period to one exclusively.

Beatrice, well nigh forgotten, was left alone in her sorrows. Oh ! these, indeed, cling faithfully to us, nor leave, till they have consigned us to the arms of death ! Men are wont to say " faithful as a dog." They should say rather, " faithful as sorrow."

When the pope thought it full time to act, he sent for Ferdinando Taverna, who was in an agony of expectation for the cardinalship, conferred on him subsequently under the title of Saint Eusebius, and consigned to him the sentence, saying :

" I entrust to you this affair of the Cenci, that you may, as early as possible, fulfill the requirements of justice."

And immediately afterwards, to escape molestation, and lest he should relent, he proceeded to Monte Cavallo, under pretext of being in greater readiness the next morning to consecrate the new bishop of Ulm, but in reality to facilitate the full and speedy execution of his order.

Monsignore Taverna, a most docile instrument of the pontiff, betook himself instantly to the palace, where, having assembled the judges, they together devised the manner in which, on the ensuing morning, the sentence should be executed. In an ancient extract from the

Giornale della Confraternità di San Giovanni deccolato in Roma, book 16, page 66, we read :

“ On Friday, the 10th December, 1599, two hours after the Angelus, it was made known that on the following morning some persons were to be executed in the Torre di Nona and Savella prisons : I, therefore, five hours after the Angelus, assembled the fraternity, chaplain, sacristan and bailiff, and, having proceeded to Torre di Nona and prayed, the undermentioned criminals, sentenced to death, were consigned to us : Signor Giacomo Cenci and Signor Bernardino, brothers, sons of the *quondam* Signor Francesco Cenci. A portion of the fraternity, having gone at the same hour to the Corte Savella and prayed in the chapel, the following criminals, condemned to death, were consigned to them : Signora Beatrice Cenci, daughter of the *quondam* Francesco Cenci, and Signora Lucretia Petroni, wife of the *quondam* Francesco Cenci, Roman ladies.”

Feeling in duty bound to record the names of those estimable men who were present, in the capacity of comforters, at the awful tragedy enacted two and a half centuries ago, I do it the more willingly, as I can so readily transcribe them here, in the order in which they are found registered in the same extract.

“ At the aforesaid prison of Torre di Nona were present Messrs. Giovanni Aldobrandini, Aurelio del Migliore, Camillo Moretto, Francesco Vai, and Migliore Guidotti. At the prison of Corte Savella were Maria Corazza, Horatio Ansaldi, Anton Coppali, Ruggiero Ruggieri, and myself who wrote this paragraph.”

While this band of warm hearted Italians are on their way to render death less bitter to Beatrice, what is she doing ?

She is sleeping. Let us not awaken her : only approach

in silence to catch one glimpse of her heavenly beauty. Does she not seem, indeed, a celestial being? Look at these polished cheeks, from which the roseate hue of her virgin soul has not yet faded away; gentle sleep touches them with a still warmer tint, and her whole figure glows with the radiance reflected from its golden pinions. Gaze on her lips; ah! how many of her tears have they drunk; yet now, half unclosed, they lighten up with a sad, sweet smile; this smile once a starry ray shining amid the dewy petals of a rose, now the sinister light shed by the setting sun on clouds black with tempest. Soon will burst the storm, soon will break forth the overwrought passion! Now the ray is all purple and gold; that smile now seems as if set upon those lips by the guardian angel of Beatrice.

Look no, let us not look on her eyes: there was a time when in their light the air grew brighter, sunbeams redoubled their splendor; when the tapers of jocund festivals were eclipsed in their presence: but tears have dimmed them now; and too eloquently do they speak to the heart of the immense grief that has weighed upon her. Ah! would that this sleep could be eternal! It would indeed be a pity to make her open her eyes to the light. Are not light and sorrow identical to her? Could she but awake in the bosom of God, far, far from the miseries of this accursed oppression, it would be, truly a mercy. Oh! Lord, never awake her more: recall thy breath with which thou hast animated this dear girl; absorb in thy supreme soul the spiritual spark that burns within her. The wings of the beautiful dove are bruised; impose not on her another flight, or invite her to the flight immortal. In vain! God stamps his inexorable finger on the brow of all his creatures, and their destinies must be fulfilled. Her eyes must open to new and more tremendous visions; the fibers of her heart must stretch with

more poignant tortures, and then she will die. God wills that her life be consumed in the fire of agony, and that this fire endure so long as a fragment of bones or shred of nerve can afford it aliment.

She still sleeps, but the smile has vanished from her lips, and her brows begin to contract. Over this forehead, once so smooth, so polished, misfortune's fiery plow-share traced, in one brief hour, a profound furrow. Of what is she dreaming? Do the last, but divine, souvenirs of love wander through her mind? Or does she dream of her father's outbursts of fury, the glittering steel that rent his throat, or the tortures she endured? She speaks listen :

"But why, oh, God! art thou inimical to me? What have I done to thee?" And violently raising her fettered hands, the chains fall back with a clanking sound, which, however, does not awaken her: she sleeps on and mourns. But a phantom stands suddenly before her; it is the very image of her brother, Giacomo; it moves to the bedside and thus addresses her: "Courage! arise. The hour is come." To which she inquiringly replies: "Whither are we to go?" The phantom bends down as if to whisper something in her ear, and its head, gushing with blood, falls from its shoulders and rolls upon the coverlid. With one heart-rending shriek Beatrice awakes.

Resolutely rising on her side, she casts her terror stricken eyes around the dungeon. Nothing seemed changed; the lamp still burned before the image of the Madonna; beyond the bed she could descry but little: the deepest silence reigned; yet, in one of its corners, two kneeling figures, unseen by her, were engaged in prayer for the salvation of her soul.

She heard one step, then another. At length from among the shadows issued forth one less dark and unde-

fined, which, advancing very slowly into the circle of light shed by the lamp, showed itself to be a venerable Capuchin, bowed down by fasting and age. Beatrice fixed her bewildered eyes steadfastly on that pallid face, but uttered not a word. The aged monk raised his hand in sign of benediction, and recited the prayer which, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, claims the virtue of exorcising the evil spirit from the body possessed of it. She allowed him to finish his prayer, and then, in a kindly manner, said :

“Father, I have never been possessed of the devil.”

“It may be so, daughter, but he is ever prowling around us like a roaring lion, and it is, therefore, meet that we should stand prepared to sustain his assault. Will you, daughter, approach the tribunal of penance? I am here ready to shrive you.”

“To-morrow.”

“To-morrow? Why should we defer until to-morrow what can be done to-day? Is man master of to-morrow?”

“Thus unprepared, taken by surprise, suddenly awakened by a terrible dream. . . .”

“And does death intimate to us the hour of his approach? Does he not come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night? Christ himself hath said so.”

At this moment, the dungeon door, creaking on its hinges, was thrown open, and by the light of a torch was seen entering the deputy procurator, accompanied by some government officials, who, with somber countenances, indicating neither cruelty nor benevolence, approached the bed of Beatrice. Signor Ventura, for such was the deputy's name, thus accosted her :

“If, gentle lady, by deferring the announcement of your destiny, I could in any wise change it, most willingly would I do so. It is my painful duty to read you the sentence.”

"Of death," exclaimed Beatrice.

The Capuchin covered his face with both hands ; the others bowed their heads. Beatrice, in a moment of frenzy, seized the friar's mantle, and cried out from the depths of her heart :

Oh, my God ! my God ! how is it possible that I, so young, must die ? Scarcely born, why will they so cruelly deprive me of life ? Lord ! Lord ! what crime have I committed ? Life ! Do you know what life is at the age of fifteen ? "

"Life," replied the monk, "is a burden that increases with years. Happy are the unborn ! Happy, in the next degree, are those from whom God deigns to remove it prematurely ! What, oh daughter ! hast thou experienced in thy past years that makes thee yearn to live ? "

"Nothing," answered Beatrice, hastily : she then paused to reflect on a point of time which memory seemed to gild with its rays, but the moment it was marked, darkness obscured it : this increased her dejection, and in still feebler voice, she rejoined :

"Nothing . . . nothing. . . ."

"Then, take courage : let us rise from this table, whose food is ashes, and whose drink is tears. . . ."

"But the manner, father . . . oh ! the manner !

A thousand ways, daughter, Providence offers to depart this life : the quickest is the best ; but all are equally blessed, provided they lead to Heaven."

"And the infamy, father ; the opprobrium heaped on my memory ? "

"These are groveling thoughts. Of what weight is the judgement of man, compared with that of God ? What are ages in the breath of the Lord ? Fame passes away, and time, that wafts it, passes away also. On the threshold of the Infinite, years are as insignificant as

grains of sand. Turn thy thoughts, daughter! towards heaven, and forget the things of earth."

"Ah, death . . ." murmured Beatrice, and the fatal word blanched her lips as it escaped them : a cold sweat suffused her brow, her every limb shuddered, and her drooping lids shaded her bewildered eyes:

"Help," cried Virginia ; and instantly ran for stimulants to revive her. But Beatrice, meanwhile, recovering her senses, said :

"It is passed;" and she parted over her brow her hair, wet with perspiration. Then, turning to the bystanders, she added : "Forgive me, gentlemen, it was only a moment of weakness : Jesus had it likewise ; excuse it then in me, sinner as I am. Now, sir, you may fulfill your duty : I am ready to hear you.

The illustrious Signor Ventura then read the sentence, not omitting a single word, in a long drawn, monotonous, and lugubrious voice, like a bell tolling for a passing soul. Having finished, he regarded Beatrice, and thought of repeating a certain little homily on the virtue of patience, which he had often, as he believed, delivered with the happiest effect on similar occasions, but observing that the girl was undaunted, he concluded to spare himself this trouble in the present instance. It was, therefore, with a somewhat ungracious manner he departed with his assistants to read the sentence to the other condemned. "The discourse," said he to himself, "will do for those who may seem to require it : nothing lost."

"Virginia," said Beatrice, "please leave me for a moment ; time presses, and before I die, I must make my confession, and set my soul in order. Go, my sister, I will send for you again."

Virginia, feeling as though her heart would break, retired without opening her lips, and had she tried to speak,

the words must have died upon her tongue. Beatrice, now that her eyes were accustomed to the scanty light, perceived in an angle of the dungeon the kneeling figure of a man, whose face was buried in his hands : he, too, was hooded, and none of his features were visible. So motionless was he, that he scarcely seemed a living being. Why is he here ? Who is he that would presume to share in the secrets of heaven ? The confession can be heard by one alone ; otherwise, it would be a sacrilege.

She hesitates in silence ; the Capuchin, likewise mute, dares not speak. Beatrice looks from one to the other, and, unable to penetrate the mystery, prolongs the silence.

That prostrate figure is Guido Guerra, the despairing lover of Beatrice. And what brings him here at this solemn hour ? Why does he cast a deeper gloom over her last moments ? Has he not already done enough ? To whom has the hate of others proved so fatal as his love to Beatrice ? He it was who awoke in that virgin heart an affection which he afterwards quenched in blood. He it was who, attempting with ill devised measures to save her, deprived her not only of life, but reputation. Let him be content with all this, and retire. Can it be he is come to see if still she loves ? What matters that ? If this flame yet burns, alas ! like the buried vestal lamp, it burns only to warm the dead, or illumine the sepulcher. Or, perhaps, he is come to drink the parting tear of the desolate girl ? Go ; that would be too like the voluptuous appetite of the vampire. Or, it may be, he is come to revive those hopes, which already she has cast away, as in ancient times the virgins of Greece flung their severed locks on the tombs of the departed ? Let her die in peace, for even in life both would be divided by a river of blood, on whose shores both would wander perpetually, unable and unwilling to pass the current. When destiny

sets in motion the grinding wheel of misfortune, why should man place himself between it and its victim ? The last and only office remaining to the friend of the unfortunate is to imprint a kiss on the graven letters of her monument, the seal to the finished letter. He who from above beholds this act will break ere long the seal, and shelter in eternal peace the disconsolate survivor.

But Guido, as we have seen, has penetrated into Beatrice's prison. Whether God or demon urged him on, he neither cared nor knew. He was resolved to see her, and he sees her now : he sees naught else ; gladly would he clasp the girl's dear hand in his, were the ax even falling to cut them asunder. Gladly would he place his head beside hers upon the block, and glue his lips to hers after the death stroke of the executioner. And when, after exposing his face, she shall recognize him who was the source of all her woe, how will she meet him ? What will she say ?

Guido rises to his feet, totters forward a few steps, then pauses and weeps.

"Who weeps?" said Beatrice : "I thought mine was the most desolate of all the souls imprisoned in these walls."

These words from the affectionate lips of Beatrice, fell on Guido's ear like the music of Paradise. The enchantment of that voice dared him to execute what his passion was powerless to perform. Suddenly throwing back the hood, behold Guido's face issues forth, eloquently expressive and beautiful as a head by Correggio. Silent and trembling he approaches Beatrice. She recognizes him and shrinks back in trepidation : Guido recoils a step. Neither the sorrowful lover nor the afflicted maid dares breathe a syllable : the only sound audible at this moment is the faint clanking of the chain stirred by Beatrice's quick beating heart.

Avoiding, and yet at the same time courting- Guido's gaze, Beatrice at length fixes on him a look expressive of deepest sadness. In that mutual glance their whole souls overflow ; from their lips not a sigh escapes. The eyes of Beatrice have spoken volumes ; for the spirit of love, passing, like that of God, before them, had said to her : "Thou didst accuse thy father to him ; didst excite in his breast implacable fury ; had he loved thee less, he would never have been a homicide ; he manifested his supreme love, when at one blow, he took another's life and forfeited his own hope ; Guido loves thee rather as a saint than a mistress." And from her eyes flashed love and forgiveness.

Guido wept. Refreshed by this shower of tears, his lips would perhaps have opened to speak, had not the Capuchin interrupted him, by saying, gently, as he joined their hands :

"Silence ! One word from your mouth would be dangerous to you and a reproach to me. What God binds together man may separate, not loosen. Now, have done, my children."

Then with resolute arm he separated them. Beatrice, ever kindly, did not resist ; but Guido angrily thrust back the monk, who brought him to a sense of duty with this mild reproof :

"My son, would you then sprinkle my white hairs with shame, because I sympathized with you ?"

Guido bent down, and kissed the iron band which fettered the wrists of Beatrice : as he saw upon her finger the ring he had sent by Farinaccio, he sighed forth a word which she either understood not, or cared not to hear. The friar, in the meantime, adjusted the hood on Guido's head, and putting his arm round his waist led him to the door ; where, having informed the vigilant

sentries that his companion, debilitated by long watching, was unable to withstand the distressing scene, he committed him to the charitable charge of the Brothers of Mercy, who, receiving him with every show of benevolence, escorted him out of the prison. Each step of the staircase, as he descended, was watered with his tears.

Beatrice stood forlorn, at the door whence Guido had disappeared; the noise of her chains alone too painfully reminded her that she was not dreaming, but awake.

When Father Angelico reëntered the cell, she asked him caressingly :

“ And where is he gone now ? ”

“ To the convent.”

“ Ah ! is he very wretched ? ”

“ Very. He does not always sojourn in the convent; but often at night a rap is heard at the door, and Guido presents himself. The friars receive and conceal him, for they feel grateful for the abundant alms his ancestors lavished on their monastery. He demands neither food nor repose, nor does he desire them; he goes to the chapel, kneels before the high altar, and passes whole hours on the cold steps, as if absorbed in deep study, and would appear lifeless, were it not for his tears. His is great sorrow, the tears of which alone give indication of life. Had he an enemy, his heart would be touched with compassion to see him reduced to such a state.”

So spoke the friar, and his words effaced the last impressions of the fatal night on which she beheld her father murdered by her lover.

“ But where does he conceal himself at other times? Reverend father, when you shall see him again, I charge you warn him to leave Rome: this air is fatal to him. Do you know the only man in ecclesiastical Rome who has a grain of pity? The executioner.”

"I will deliver him your message."

"And should he hesitate, beseech him to do so for my sake."

"I will do all you desire. Courage, then, my daughter; it is time you should turn your thoughts to heaven: prostrate yourself upon the floor, for the more one humbleth himself the more shall he be exalted. Repentance is twin-born with mercy, and when they present themselves united before the throne of God, it rarely happens that Divine justice does not sheathe its sword."

Beatrice knelt down and opened to her confessor the inmost recesses of her heart; trivial feelings, slight faults, which she considered even enormous, yet which evinced the stainless innocence of that proud, but gentle spirit. The friar, having heard the confession of these unimportant thoughts and actions, expressed his great grief at the dire necessity which prompted her to imbrue her hands in her father's blood. Beatrice remained silent. Attributing her silence to remorse or shame, her confessor, instead of manifesting displeasure, rather applauded it, entreating her, however, to reveal all her transgressions and withhold nothing from him.

"So far," she replied, "as I can remember, I have confessed all my sins—as for those I have involuntarily committed, may the Divine goodness be merciful to me."

"Search yourself . . . examine well."

"I will do so:" and, assuming a meditative attitude, she prolonged the silence to a greater length than the friar had anticipated. And now, mistaking for dissimulation that which was really the result of shame, he proceeded:

"Tell me; by whom was Francesco Cenci murdered?"

"It is not for me to confess the sins of others."

These words she pronounced with such frank ingenuousness as to confound the Capuchin.

"Did you not murder him?"

"I? Certainly not."

"How, then, are you accused of the murder?"

"Reverend father, I have undergone such agonizing tortures, that the mere thought of them sends an icy chill to my very heart; indeed, I cannot imagine how my frame has borne up against them: I was fully disposed to die amid the tortures for truth's sake; but the endless entreaties and prayers of my relatives and counselors, added to their abundant arguments, induced me to take the whole crime upon myself, for by so doing, it was believed I should save my stepmother and brothers. As for myself, they said it would be easy for me to procure an acquittal, by reason of making known the cruelties and scandalous attempts of Count Cenci. To tell the truth, the arguments did not strike me as over weighty, nor would even their prayers have overcome me, had it not been for my great disinclination to oppose those who were nearest and dearest to me. I assented, and offered the sacrifice of my life and reputation, in the vain hope of saving them. I had a presentiment that my self accusation would be of no avail, and said so: the event has proved that I divined rightly. But patience! It was no fault of mine if my dear relations were not acquitted."

"But did you not affirm, under oath, that you had committed the crime?"

"The advocates assured me that, according to all law, human and divine, the salvation of one's own life, effected at the expense of his who attempts it, not being a crime, much less could its protection by perjury be offensive to God; and therefore I made oath."

"Oh, sophists! sophists! When did truth ever lead to perdition?"

"Such was my own way of thinking; but the advocate

charged me to confide fully in him; and so great is his reputation for wisdom and learning, I thought it the height of presumption to prefer my own opinion to his."

"And who recommended him to you?"

"He—Guido—who sent me this ring, that was to have been blessed at our nuptials." And as she said this, her cheeks blushed crimson; while the friar, in an earnest manner, rejoined:

"State, my daughter, circumstantially, the whole matter: perhaps you have sinned against yourself more than you imagine."

"But the secrets of God?"

"The secrets of God," replied the Capuchin, sternly, "are buried in man's heart; from him we may wrest his heart, but not the secret within."

Beatrice then exposed, in detail, all the facts, without omitting the slightest particular. The friar, who at first listened incredulously, was gradually induced to believe in the ingenuous aspect, deliberate words, and undisguised candor of the magnanimous girl; nor could he refrain from interrupting her by a gesture and exclamation of surprise:

"Lord! Lord! When did ever a purer soul than this visit the earth?"

The confession being ended, the astonished friar cried out:

"Blessed soul! I absolve thee, since my office imposes this duty; but I declare, it is myself who should fall down before thee, and beseech thee to recommend me to God. Can prayer be more acceptable to him than from those guileless lips of thine? Address thyself to God; I will unite my prayers with thine, that mine may ascend to heaven: nor shall I pray alone for thee, but for this unfortunate city, and for thy accusers and judges."

Beatrice prostrated herself before the holy image which hung from the wall, and invoking, as women are wont, the blessed Virgin, thanked her for so premature an exit from this miserable life, and especially for the grace granted her to behold once more that dear Guido, who, denied her companionship on earth, hoped to be united with her for ever in Paradise.

Here she paused, as if she had suddenly trod upon a viper, and inquired in dismay :

"Reverend father, tell me, for charity's sake, will Guido be pardoned? Will he be made worthy of eternal salvation? In the future, shall I not have to tremble in his sight? Will it be permitted me to clasp the hand that has killed my father?"

"And thinkest thou, oh ! daughter, that we can relish the joys of heaven, if we forget not earthly sorrows? If the soul be immortal, the remembrance of having dwelt a prisoner in this fleshly tabernacle would prove not only a burden, but a reproach."

"Ah!" replied Beatrice with a sigh, "yet I would not choose to forget my love, though its memory be full of sorrow."

She then prayed fervently to God, while the monk beside her, implored the divine blessing on his innocent companion.

A comforter (one of the fraternity) now presented himself at the door, beckoned the friar to approach, and whispered something in his ear. The latter, returning to Beatrice, said :

"Daughter, if you desire to see your mother, you may have the privilege."

"Let her come . . . ah ! let her come, my poor mother ! We can console each other."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GOWNS.

"In that black garment would I clothe myself,
Which I with my own hands have wrought."

GROSS.

WORDS have a limit, and a much more contracted one than some imagine: the pen is not, as they fancy, the best conductor of the soul's electricity. How many sensations, burning intensely in the heart, are doomed to flicker faintly on paper! Paper is often but the shroud of thought: I, therefore, do not attempt to describe the frenzied interview of Lucretia and Beatrice, the sweet bitterness of their embraces, and kisses, and mutual mingling of their tears.

Eagerly they strove to throw their arms around each other's neck; alas! their fetters forbade a fond embrace. I pass over the convulsive sobs, the heart-rending exclamations, the long drawn, fervid sighs; I have so many of their agonies yet to record, that the mere thought of them makes the tired soul tremble.

But all has an end here below, even sorrow, though it be the chief heritage bequeathed to us by our common parent. The mother and daughter became at length tranquil. Their hearts have need of repose to prepare for fresh tribulation.

Beatrice, observing that Donna Lucretia wore a gown, embroidered with flower work and trimmed with Déjou lace, was led to glance at her own; and to her surprise, she discovered that she was habited in a green dress,

ornamented with gold, which, in happier days, she was wont to wear in preference to all others.

Memory, too often an unseasonable friend, reminded her that in this gown she was dressed when she first saw Guido, and was seen by him, and also that he—his juvenile spirit reveling in the poetry of Petrarch—often said to her, she looked so like Laura in her girlhood. But this was not the time to cherish these sunny memories; so, chasing them away, she began to consider the impropriety of meeting death in such gay attire. Thinking, as was really the case, that Donna Lucretia, immersed in sorrow, was also unaware of the circumstance, she said :

“Dear mother, when we women set out on the voyage of life, our censors say we take vanity from our *viaticum*, and would let the bark perish rather than lose the freight. Nor are they wholly wrong. Women, if so disposed, can cure themselves of other vices, but not of vanity; because the former are easily recognized, but the latter seldom or never: nor can one even combat against vanity, for, instead of sustaining the assault, it flies away and conceals itself somewhere about one’s person, like the shadow at midday.”

“I do not comprehend you, Beatrice: these are topics too abstruse for my capacity.”

“If you will cast but a single glance at yourself, it will render them clearer: just see how, doubtless unconsciously, you have decked yourself out!”

“Oh! mother of mercies!” exclaimed Donna Lucretia, astonished at beholding herself in such a costume, “one would think I had lost my wits.”

Beatrice smiled at the ingenuous words and manner of her mother, and then added :

“To make such a display would seem like bravado, like a defiance of death, which is far from our thoughts.

We shall meet our fate with resignation, since God has ordained we must die, shall we not, dear mother?"

"You talk like the same wise, good child you ever were."

"Courage, then, Virginia;" continued Beatrice; "procure us a sufficient quantity of stuff to make two mantles, two cords, and two veils Why do you not speak, Virginia?"

Virginia, so heavy was her heart, could not articulate a word: after brief interval, she, sobbing, said:

"I have a piece of black dimity, and another of purple taffeta, which my father bought for me at the fair of Viterbo; they have never been made into gowns for they would make me too conspicuous will you have them?"

"Certainly: I will give you money to buy others less mournful, for a girl, like you, ought not to wear dark or black colors. Know, that while I was alive I used to wear green. And as for the cords?"

"My father has some."

"And the veils?"

"They are furnished by the Brothers of Mercy:" and here Virginia fell into a fit of lamentation. Beatrice held her hand to her heart, as if to restrain the flood of affection ready to burst forth.

"Such being the case, we shall have fewer things to procure than I thought. Make haste, Virginia, as our hours are numbered."

Virginia, after brief absence, returned with the stuffs, and Beatrice, without delay, began to cut them into proper shape. She held one end and Virginia the other, while the scissors glided through the threads with wondrous celerity.

"Observe, Virginia, how easy it is to cut this thread! Life, also, is a thread. Come now, help me to

sew a little, and with long stitches . . . they will suffice for the short time the garment will be worn."

The women began to sew ; but Lucretia and Virginia made but little progress, for every stitch was followed by a tear. Beatrice quietly reproved them :

"Why," said she, "do you weep while preparing this dress which is to accompany me to the grave? Did Pope Julius weep, when he commissioned Michael Angelo to build his sepulcher? Why then should we weep? He certainly had a more magnificent place in prospect when he ordered it, than we have in making these dresses; however, he did not see it completed, nor was it, in the end, conformable to his design: we, on the contrary, shall have the consolation of finishing these with our own hands and according to our taste."

And Virginia redoubled her lamentations.

"Know, young woman, that what renders death bitter is the fear of dying: death itself is not a calamity, or, if it be, only a brief one. In ancient times, our forefathers accustomed themselves to regard it as an inevitable event of nature; for were it not so, mankind would be so strongly impelled to self destruction, that the race itself would fail. When fear is once overcome, death descends upon our eyes like sleep to the weary. And where is the tired mortal that does not sigh for repose? where the oppressed that would not sleep for ever?"

"But instead of relieving such miseries by death, were it not better to gladden life with additional enjoyments? Always terror and fear, but love never . . ."

It was Virginia, the hapless daughter of Master Alexander, the executioner, who pronounced these words. Beatrice fixed her eyes upon her. She, too, bore on her face the finger-print of destiny. Touched with melancholy, Beatrice responded :

"Our intellect, Virginia, is incapable of fathoming the causes of all things : when it fails, let us unite it to faith, that we may thereby attain paradise." At this moment she snapped the thread in the act of drawing it, and showing it thus broken to Virginia, added : " You see, in whatever part the thread is broken, it can enter again the eye of the needle "

" Ah ! were but I enough, for I am now old ! But you, poor, innocent girl ! Alas ! alas ! "

And they burst forth into still louder sobs and cries. So sudden was this spasm of grief, that Beatrice herself shook with terror. The constancy she had learned from the examples and teachings of philosophers was about to yield, when, inclining her head, a ray from the lamp burning before the Madonna shone upon it. Then she exclaimed :

" Ah ! too true ; and I had forgotten it : when every other consolation fails, thou art the star that smiles amid the storm. Faith is spiritual reason, and we are all but spirits ; we touch the very gate of eternity. "

As if prompted by a common impulse, all immediately rose and knelt before the celestial image, as timid fledglings shelter themselves under their mother's wings when scared by the growling thunder ; and having drawn from that inexhaustible source fresh waters of consolation, returned anew to their melancholy labor.

The dawn of their last day on earth finds Lucretia and Beatrice still engaged in alternate prayer and conversation. In the Eastern heaven, a rosy splendor promised a pure, golden morning to the Romans : the only boast—and perchance, the greatest misfortune—that remains to our country, disconsolate evermore.

An assistant of Master Alexander now presented himself : his chief would not, or could not, come in person.

This young man's features were of a severe but not disagreeable cast. For some time past he had been paying his addresses to Virginia, nor had he shrunk from imploring a reciprocity of feeling. The girl had replied with a shudder, which, for the moment, made him desist from urging his suit. He afterwards asked himself, what man, however abject, would dare salute her as his wife? What *hospice* would shelter her as friend? what convent, as nun? And, on the death of her father, what could screen her husband from insult, from the sneers and persecution of the people? Infamy must necessarily become the bridesmaid of such nuptials.

The assistant held a razor in his hand. He looked at Beatrice and stood as if dazzled by her exquisite loveliness: her eyes fell on him, and the sight chilled her; but summoning her courage, she thought to herself: Perhaps the brutal populace is to be deprived of a sanguinary spectacle, which only renders them more ferocious? Then turning to the young man, she said: "Why do you stand there like one asleep? Why parley with us, when the moments of our life are numbered? We are prepared for the worst."

The assistant answered, hesitatingly:

"Illustrious lady you know it is the custom your hair."

"My hair . . . ?" exclaimed Beatrice; and raising her hand quickly to her head, she removed the comb, and let her ample golden locks flow down like a wave over her whole figure. "Behold my hair! what would you with it?"

But the assistant, more embarrassed than ever, remained silent, and Beatrice resumed:

"Every force has its right: the right of the ax is not to be impeded in its fall I understand be quick cut."

And her fair hair fell shorn to the ground.

Beatrice regarded it listlessly as it lay scattered on the dungeon floor, and tears came to her eyes and coursed after each other, down her face and bosom. No sorrow such as this had hitherto transpierced her soul, as none had humbled it so low. Were her life now even spared, how could she again appear among those gentle ladies, once her companions? Thus shorn by the hand of the executioner, rifled of her tresses, which were her pride and glory—it was next thing to decapitation itself—indeed, it was the beginning of the bloody end.

There she stands amid her severed, silken locks, like the angel of light, who, on the day of malediction, sees broken at his feet the diadem of rays that encircled his brow. Ah! what gentle, assiduous cares had this hair received from her own and the hands of others! How beautifully varied were the shapes in which she could fold and twine it round her head! The poets consecrated it to fame, and declared it worthier to shine with starry luster in the vault of heaven than the locks of Berenice. When garlanded with flowers, they seemed happy to exhale upon its ringlets their odorous sighs. The gems that sparkled upon it shone more brilliantly, as if exulting to press it. . . . And what was the end of all this? To be cut by the executioner's hand . . . strange fatality!

Beatrice gathered up the severed hair, and regarding it earnestly for a moment, thus apostrophised:

“Faithful companion of all my misfortunes, I had hoped thou wouldst have descended with me to the grave. Since God has otherwise ordained, thou shalt not survive me to deck the head of another, to conceal, perhaps, the baldness of age, or to increase the deceit of vanity; thou shalt not disgrace thy virginal source on the brow of

depravity or falsehood . . . And mightest thou not, alas! impart sorrow and woe to whoever should wear thee? It is but just that thou, like myself, shouldst be decomposed into thy original elements: let our fatal atoms be lost in the boundless destiny of the universe! United we have undergone, and would doubtless hereafter undergo, too painful experiences. I will separate only this tress: let the rest be consumed."

And she flung the hair into the fire. A moment, and nothing remained of these golden locks but a handful of white ashes.

"Virginia," continued Beatrice, "I divide this tress in two, and consign it to your care. Shouldst thou ever meet an individual, tall and handsome, with fair hair, and the mark of fatality impressed on his brow, thou wilt recognize him, because all the unfortunate bear a certain family likeness; and when thou didst first present thyself to me, I knew thee to be my sister in sorrow; and *then* . . . listen," and she softly whispered a word in her ear, "thou wilt give him this lock: the other thou mayst reserve for thyself. I can leave thee money and clothes and jewels, and will leave them, but these are no portion of myself; by having about thee this hair, thou wilt always wear a particle of my being . . . whilst it lasts . . . for the dead are decomposed and their relics found no more. It cannot bring misfortune on thy head, secured, poor girl, as thou art, by despair. Would to God I could change thy lot! At all events, I may wish thee every blessing; and if, as seems but too probable, thou also must be consumed in the anguish of evil days, may death fall gently upon thee as this last kiss I imprint on thy as lips."

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE EXECUTIONER'S DAUGHTER.

"And courtesy was to him a baseness."

DANTE "INFERNO."

VIRGINIA felt death in her heart : she dared not speak, and struggled hard to refrain from weeping. Lest she should expire at the feet of Beatrice, she seized the opportunity, while the latter interchanged some words with the Capuchin, to leave the dungeon. Scarcely had the door closed upon her, when she was attacked by giddiness, her limbs trembled, and an icy coldness seized upon her heart : she strove to sustain herself against the wall, but failing in the effort, fell moaning upon the pavement.

The Brothers of Mercy, who, actively vigilant to fulfill the slightest desire of the condemned, were at hand, raised her from the ground, and, recognizing the daughter of the executioner, placed her in a chair and conveyed her to her room, in the belief that her indisposition resulted from remaining too long in a confined atmosphere. Indeed, who among them could have supposed that Master Alexander's daughter bore a heart capable of bursting with pity ?

Her father was up and doing, engaged in a task, certainly, of pleasing character to him, that of sharpening his ax. When the Brothers of Mercy entered, he was stooping down, trying with his nail the keenness of its edge.

"Master Alexander," said the hooded brethren to him,

"an accident has just happened to your daughter; put her to bed, and try restore her."

Having said this, they immediately disappeared; for who among them all would have lavished his benevolence on the child of an executioner? Our justice folk, whether high or low, are paid off and detested: we fling them the bone, and kick them as we do other dogs; and those very men, who, by their institution, are bound to the fulfillment of charitable deeds, think they have done enough when they raise the fallen. Alexander hastened to his daughter, lifted her up, loosened her dress, and, persuaded it was a swoon, deposited his ax in a corner, that he might search for some feathers to burn under her nostrils: this expedient not being successful, he sprinkled some vinegar on her forehead. The girl did not revive; her father became terrified, and scrutinized her features more closely. . . . Those red pimples, which the executioner had observed on the mouth of Marzio, who expired under torture, he now discovers on that of his daughter. Striking his head with his clenched fist, he ran to the door, crying, "Help! help!"

Scarcely had he touched the threshold, when a voice from below, hoarse and sinister, called to him:

"Halloo! Master Alexander . . . be quiet . . . take the ax, and haste to Torre di Nona; they are waiting for you."

"I cannot."

"That's a good one, worth a ducat fresh from the mint! What right have you to say you can, or cannot? You are sold, body and soul, to the illustrious individuals who command you."

"I cannot . . . I cannot. Clear the staircase; I must call the physician."

"What do you want of a physician? There is no need

of medicine where you are : you are wanted to cut off four heads."

"Suppose I do not choose to go ? Suppose I here lay down my life and ax, not, however, without saying to you, who are as infamous as I, nay, more so, because you add hypocrisy to wickedness ; it is you yourselves who kill with the steel those whom you have previously stabbed with the pen. My daughter is dying, and you hinder me from procuring assistance. I possess nothing, absolutely nothing, except this dear, but helpless daughter, the only link that binds me to my race, and will you dispute with me the right of restoring her to health ? Should my Virginia die, what matters it to me if I be the executed instead of the executioner ? If I can save her life, I will fly with her into a desert, or to some uninhabited island, far, far away from you all ; better eat wild berries than your bread of poison, your flour of dead men's bones."

And reëntering his lodge, he furiously seized the ax and hurled it down the staircase, accompanying the action with these words :

"Go, take the ax to your master, and tell him to write henceforth his indictments with steel. I resign my office ; let the procurator combine his functions and mine, as they were before hypocrisy divided them between the judge and the executioner. Go. . . ."

"Master Alexander's brain is turning," exclaimed Signor Ventura, as he jumped quickly aside ; and well it was he did so, for had the ax, as it came tearing down the steps, making the sparks fly at every bound, come in contact with his legs, Signor Ventura could never again have given evidence of his agility. He then ordered the body of police that formed his retinue to mount the stairs, and arrest the executioner, and should force be requisite, to bind him with ropes.

"Yesterday, the rascal received his pay, and a hundred ducats in addition, for preparing the scaffold, for carriages, pincers, fire, sawdust, sponges, etc. ; and now he indulges in idle fancies and whims about his daughter ! Should she die, they will bury her ; and this is no trifle when done for an executioner : in the mean time let him who executes the law fall down before it and obey."

It was fortunate for the police that Alexander had thrown away his ax, otherwise torrents of blood would have flowed down those stairs : as it was, a fierce struggle took place on the landing, and tremendous blows were exchanged between the contending parties. The executioner bravely resisted, crying out :

"Let me first aid Virginia, my daughter, and then I will cut off any head whatever, were it even St. Paul's. . . . My daughter, oh ! my daughter. . . . Are you worse than wolves ? I appeal to you in the name of charity. Listen to me : I swear, should you ever fall into my clutches, I would lop off your heads before you were conscious of it. I would, on the word of an honorable headsman !"

"He is mad. Is your daughter dead ? Come, cheer up. Perhaps you would preserve her to become the wife of a marquis ?"

So retorted the police, to whom Master Alexander, overpowered by numbers, at length surrendered himself. Having pinioned his arms, they thrust him down the staircase, accompanying their harsh treatment with bursts of laughter and ribaldry, in derision of his manifestations of paternal tenderness.

Vanquished by force, Alexander ceased his lamentation, and was silent. Turning, however, his face towards the room where he had left his daughter, nay, his very soul, he heard a groan. It was the voice of his child ; he would

have wept, had not the raileries of the police and their companions imposed a restraint on his emotions. If his lips did not express the wish of Caligula, his heart most certainly desired that the Roman people had but one head, that he might sever it at a blow. Whilst being dragged from the prison of Corte Savella to Torre di Nona, he chanced to meet a Brother of Mercy, whom he had often seen and heard while performing the functions of comforter with genuine Christian fervor and charity. Beckoning him to approach, he thus addressed him :

"Christian, by the love you bear to Jesus, I implore you to proceed to my house in Corte Savella, and assist my daughter, who is dying."

"Friend, I am not on duty to-day, and have some other business on hand : apply to some one else."

And he went his way.

A short time after, he overtook a priest, the prior of San Simone, and, in a still more humble tone of entreaty, said :

"Man of God ! my daughter, my only daughter, is dying. Oh ! by the wounds of Jesus Christ, do me the charity to go to my house and lend her your aid."

"My son why this is woman's business."

"Well, then, try and send a woman : I will give her ten twenty scudi—my day's wages."

By this time, the priest had turned the corner.

At length, he met a savage-looking man, whose feet were stockingless, and mudded to the ancles, and whose trowsers, girt at the waist with a dirty cord, were so put on that one leg was turned up at the knee, while the other dragged on the ground ; as to the rest of his person, it was destitute of clothing, except a linen rag over his unseemly shoulders, and a cap, once of a red color, drawn down over his eyes : he walked along with an unsteady

stride, and was just recovering from a drunken fit in which he had lain as dead for the last twenty-four hours. The people called him *Otre*. If by chance a citizen, returning home late at night, stumbled in the darkness against some inert body stretched at full length in the mud, which responded to his kick with a grunt, he would pass carelessly on, saying, "*It is Otre.*" Such was his depravity, his degradation, it seemed like insulting the filthiest animals to compare him with them; yet to this wretch the miserable Alexander addressed his entreaties.

Otre, with an expression of mingled stupidity and fright, looked him full in the face, and answered with a swine-like voice :

"Wine ! wine !"

"Brother, go and aid my daughter, and I will clothe you anew from head to foot."

"Wine ! wine !"

"Yes, I will give you wine to your heart's content ; and to make sure, go to my house, and after having assisted Virginia, drink all the wine you can find."

"Your wine ? No . . . it is mixed with blood ; I will have none of your wine."

And with a mutter, he continued on his way.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE GRACE.

"How is it, cruel priests! that so much pity can take root in you?"

ALFIERI.

APPROACHING Padre Angelico, who, on his knees, with his face buried in his hands, was praying and weeping before the image of the Madonna, Beatrice touched him softly on the shoulder and said :

"Good father, will you do me the kindness to call the Brothers of Mercy, as I desire to make both to them and you, certain strange requests?"

"Willingly, daughter;" and the friar going out, soon returned in company with the hooded brethren. So entirely did the black hoods conceal their features that their eyes alone were visible; but these sufficiently revealed the passions of the soul. The disguise was so complete that it was impossible to recognize with certainty the brother Aldobrandini, who, on this occasion, acted less the part of comforter than spy: in his dry, inquisitive, shining eyes, spoke his restless, turbulent disposition.

When they had arranged themselves around Beatrice, she addressed them as follows:

"Brothers in Christ! For your charitable kindness towards me, I render you my heartfelt thanks; thanks which my lips are unable to pronounce; and I pray God to recompense you according to your deserts. I feel myself the more profoundly penetrated with gratitude, inasmuch as being hooded, and therefore unknown to me, you

would signify by this your regard only for the creature who suffers, independently of rank or quality. But I have need of other aid from you than you are ordinarily in the habit of dispensing, and I humbly implore it both from you and this most pious father. I beseech you to regard my request not as an act of imprudence but of necessity. I have had my will drawn up by the notary of the Company of the Sacred Stigmas; and apprehensive that the tribunals may place some obstacle in the way of its execution, I pray you to exert all your influence with Pope Clement, that he may sanction my dowry to be employed as stated therein; and, moreover, for my soul's welfare, that you will strive to procure the celebration of two hundred masses, one half before, the other after my interment; for which purpose you will deign to receive these forty-five ducats, which I happen to have about me, and, for any additional sum that may be required, you will please apply to Signor Francesco Scortesia, my attorney, who will give you the amount. I desire that Andrea, Ludovico and Ascamio, soldiers who, during my imprisonment, have shown me cordial benevolence, be largely remunerated, that it may teach them that kindness bestowed on the wretched is sometimes recompensed in this world, as it invariably is in the next; and may this encourage them to continue their merciful conduct to those who shall succeed me in this scene of anguish. Give to Carlo da Bertinoro forty ducats, which he lent me. Let Virginia, who with more than sisterly affection has tended and consoled me in my bitterest sorrows, beside what I bequeath her in my will, have all my linen, woollen and silk clothes, as well as all my gold ornaments now in this prison. . . . But where is Virginia? What is she doing? Why does she not make her appearance?"

Here she looked around, but not seeing the girl, continued :

“ Poor thing ! Her heart shrunk from contemplating all I am doomed to suffer. Poor girl ! Worthy in every respect of Heaven’s favor ! I cannot say I should desire to see her again ; but, in case I do not, give her my affectionate remembrances, and tell her I hope to meet her again in Paradise, where the angels are all equal, deriving their common origin, stainless and direct, from God himself.

“ When,” said she, laying her hand on her breast, “ when this heart shall have ceased to beat, you will bury me in the church of San Pietro in Montorio. There the sun, as he rises from behind the summit of Monte Cavi, sheds his earliest beams ; and although the dead are insensible to light and heat, it is consoling, at the hour of death, to be assured that the luminaries of heaven will smile upon our tomb. On the same ridge of hills, but more towards the sea, Torquato Tasso was buried four years ago. In San Pietro is the Transfiguration, the last painting by Raphael, who was hindered, by death, from giving it its final touches. I may well keep them company, for they were great from misfortune as well as from fame ; and I, though utterly destitute of genius, will become renowned for my adversity. When time shall have effaced the colors of Raphael, and spread the veil of oblivion over the verses of Tasso, our names, by virtue of love alone, will live ; and many a human being, widowed of earthly joy, shall walk these hills as on a pilgrimage of passion. Raphael’s life was extinguished in love ; Tasso’s heart was repulsed by a proud, royal lady, of whose existence, but for his poetry, the world would have never heard. In my case, ah, bitter destiny ! Love, instead of wounding my heart with his poet-favored

arrows of gold, comes like a traitor, ax in hand, behind my back. But this matters not: it is only woman's idle prattle; I pray you, forgive me. Think not that I speak in this strain through sorrow of leaving life: no, never: and mark you, could I retain it by turning back, I would not do so. As I am now going to renew my communion with God, grant, my very dear brothers in Christ, that I may count on your prayers."

Lucretia, imitating her stepdaughter's example, also disposed of several articles for the welfare of her soul and the benefit of her relations, as may be read in the extract of the *Giornale della Confraternità di San Giovanni decolato in Roma*.

Prospero Farinaccio was buried in profound sleep, gladdened by gay visions of honors, triumphs, and opulence, while this mighty pyramid of rosy dreams was capped with a splendid cardinal's hat, which, in sportive dalliance, he placed on the fair tresses of a female, whose features resembled those of Beatrice. He was suddenly awoke by the smashing of glass, and the startling sound of stones against his chamber windows. At the same moment he heard a mournful voice crying in the street:

"What are you doing? What are you doing? Whilst you are sleeping, all the Cenci are hastening to destruction."

He sprang from his bed, and threw open the window. The day had scarcely dawned. He strained his eyes, but could behold no living being. A voice in the distance repeated the melancholy announcement:

"All the Cenci are being brought to the scaffold; and do you sleep?"

He dressed hastily, flung himself into a carriage, hurried to the Prison of Corte Savella, received confirmation of the intelligence, reëntered the carriage, and hastened

to the Quirinal Palace. Mounting the steps at a bound, he gained the pope's antechamber. Here he eagerly implored the lackeys in waiting to procure him immediate access to his holiness, stating that his business was of the most urgent nature, a matter of life and death, and praying them for the love of God to make haste.

One of them, taking him very deliberately by the arm, and holding him steadily before him, said, in a trifling yet perfectly courteous manner,

"Most illustrious advocate, you must know his holiness is still sleeping."

Another, seizing Farinaccio by the left arm, made him describe a quarter of a circle, saying,

"Rest assured, most illustrious advocate, that the pope is still asleep."

A third, grasping the advocate by the other arm, turned him around in the opposite direction, saying:

"Know, most worthy advocate, that his holiness wishes to sleep, for he has not closed an eye the whole night."

Whirled about in this manner, now on one side and now on the other, Farinaccio found that he had described a complete circle, and, saving a torrent of mellifluous words, had obtained nothing of significance. Such was then the custom at the court of Rome, and such I think it still remains. Fortune, however, to give the lie to these modern Pharisees, would have it that the pope's cup-bearer should make his appearance just at this instant in the anteroom, with a foaming cup of chocolate in his hand, on his way to the papal bedchamber, to present the beverage to his master.

The servants, flinching from such an open exposure, winked at him to stop, but he ingenuously said:

"I don't understand you: you just now called me, with as much hubbub as if it were doomsday, to bring the choc-

olate to his holiness, who had been awake a long time; and now you wish me to stop."

"You are beside yourself: we did not hear his bell. His holiness is certainly asleep."

"If you, who were near by, did not hear it, how happens it that I did, and at a distance? In my opinion you begin to resemble those of whom the evangelist says, *habeant aures et non audiant*."

And lo! at this moment was heard the clamorous ding-dong of the little bell, as if rung by a person whose patience had been exhausted.

"Blessed set that you are; did I not tell you so? Make way," continued the cup-bearer.

And thrusting back the importunate domestics he passed on.

Adroitly imitating the example of the cup-bearer, Farinaccio, to the great annoyance of the former, suddenly snatched the cup from his hand, opened the door, and audaciously penetrated into the pope's chamber. The cup-bearer stopped short, crying: 'Thief! thief! But afterwards, thinking it impossible a thief could be so fool-hardy as to take refuge in the most private apartments of the pope, he stood silent, in open mouthed wonder, especially as his holiness beckoned to him to retire.

Prospero, having set the tray, with the cup, on the table, prostrated himself at Pope Clement's feet, and said:

"On my knees I implore your Holiness not to censure me for thus assuming the function—to me a most honorable one—of the humblest of your servants."

"Rise . . ."

"Ah, no! Your Holiness, leave me thus, with my head bowed down to the dust, for such should be the attitude of a disconsolate petitioner; and I am most disconsolate: I am weighed down with inexpressible sorrow."

And he waited for the pope to question him as to the motive of his coming, desiring to learn from the tone of his voice what might be hoped for, or apprehended : but the churchman remained impenetrable as a granite sphynx ; and Prospero, in the most piteous accents, continued :

"A voice, I swear it to your holiness on the word of a Christian ; an ill boding voice startled me from sleep, crying : ' Wretch, dost thou sleep, whilst the whole family of the Cenci is being dragged to the scaffold ? ' I cannot tell you, most holy father, whether this cry proceeded from paradise, or from the spirit of darkness."

"Why should you imagine that it issued from the evil one ? Truth does not abide in Satan's mouth."

"Ah ! Then the voice spoke truth. Many thanks, your holiness, to you for all this innocent blood that is about to flow. Rome has never witnessed so horrible a tragedy since the day of its foundation."

"How innocent ? Did they not all confess the crime ?"

"*Mea culpa*," continued Farinaccio, violently striking his breast with his clenched fist, "*mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. God hath wished to humble me. God hath willed to visit me with sorrow, since, as was the case with St. Peter, tears have not yet furrowed my cheeks. The wisdom of a man presuming on his science, like the love-inspired intelligence of a maiden, has proved to be but sheer insanity and a deadly snare. It was I, your holiness, who persuaded the gentle girl, though most innocent, to confess herself guilty of the parricide : she was quite disposed to die under torture, in testimony of the truth ; it was I who dissuaded her from this resolve ; I who promised her that, by inculcating herself and exonerating her relatives, she would readily save their lives and her

own : save theirs, as not being privy to the murder ; and her own, as constrained by the last necessity to defend herself from her father's evil designs. She opposed it : she maintained that the best defence of innocence was a revelation of the truth and nothing but the truth ! Oh, most sacred words, prompted assuredly by God ! But I dissuaded her, and resisted with tears in my eyes : I brought to bear the domestic affections, the generosity of the sacrifice, and the virtue of charity ; and kneeling around the bed, whereon her torn, bleeding and fractured frame reposed, her relatives and I, with hands stretched out imploringly, never left her until, despite herself and all her evil presages, she had promised to confess herself guilty in the manner she has done, according to the formula I myself suggested to the betrayed girl. Deign then, Oh ! Holy Father, to be pitiful. Oh ! should she die thus, her blood would be on my skirts, and my desolate soul would despair of salvation."

"Be not troubled on that point : we can easily secure for you the road to paradise."

"But who will ever save me from my conscience ?"

"Your conscience itself."

These words, pronounced unmistakably in a derisive sense, operated on Farinaccio like a flame from the bottomless pit : raising his eyes he looked Pope Clement full in the face, but the pontiff's features were like stone.

"My conscience," rejoined the dejected Prospero, "tells me I shall never enjoy a moment's peace."

"You will—believe me, who understand such matters, you will. Most worthy advocate, I know you to be a man of much perspicuity, and excellent in your profession : you, (and for this I tender you the praises you justly merit,) fulfilled your noble office with a zeal and perse-

verance rarely equalled, never surpassed. Now as you are so skillful in performing your own duties, leave others in peace to perform theirs."

"It was precisely for this, Holy Father! that I made bold to inform you of these things. I earnestly desired that not only your sense of duty, but the affections, the overmastering impulses of your august nature, might dispose you to justice, and that thus you might avoid taking a false step."

"We have respected in you," said the pontiff, in a somewhat tremulous voice, "the office of advocate; it is for you now to respect in us the office of judge."

Farinaccio, still prostrate at the pontiff's feet, seemed like one of those Israelites who, at the base of Mount Sinai, stood in expectation of the divine word. However, he did not yet acknowledge himself vanquished, and making a last effort, urged his request as follows:

"If justice cannot be shown, for heaven's sake be merciful."

"They must die!" concluded the pontiff, sternly, and pressed his foot firmly on the velvet cushion where it reposed.

"They must!" exclaimed Farinaccio, rising to his feet. "Ah! if they must, it is another question. Pardon me, most holy father, when I say that I ignored such a necessity as this; and allow me to retire with death at my heart."

The pope seemed mindful that he had said too much, and at once strove to amend the unguarded expression.

"Yes, certainly; in spite of me they must. The genius of the people, the reputation of Rome, the faith of the Church, enforce us to shut our ears to mercy."

"Do they require that all must die in the grip of red hot pincers, beaten with clubs, and quartered?"

"Being a man of vast erudition, you must be aware that the Egyptians condemned the parricidal son to be pierced with a countless number of sharp splinters, and afterwards burned on a pile of thorns, and the father who killed his son to look for three successive days at the body of his victim. Here in Rome, during the early ages of Paganism, there existed no law against parricides; but men's perversity became so excessive, that the fearful penalty ordained by the Pompeian law seemed too mild for the crime. Look now at the kingdoms of Spain, France, and England, and you will find the punishment is not a shade more lenient. If we cause the head of a simple homicide to be cut off, we are necessarily compelled to draw a distinction between his penalty and that of a parricide. Nevertheless, from respect to you, we will absolve the females from the pincers and quartering; but the decapitation must take place."

"And must even the boy lose his head?"

"What boy?"

"Bernardino Cenci, holy father. You must know he has not yet attained his twelfth year; and shall he also undergo the penalty of parricides? I have scarcely said anything in his defence, supposing his best advocate would be his youth and inexperience. But I was deceived."

"But did he not also confess that he participated in the crime?"

"He certainly did. But at his age can he fully comprehend what a parricide or a confession implies? Did he not confess that he might be relieved from torture, and after receiving a promise that his life should be spared? Holy father, listen once again to the voice of your heart, which inclines you to mercy; listen to it, I pray you. We also shall one day have need of pity."

"You arouse a scruple in my mind regarding Bernardino Cenci."

And the pope inclined his head in an attitude of meditation. In a few moments he resumed :

"Depravity does not ordinarily prevail at this age, but it does occasionally ; and we read of some convincing examples. Nor does the immature age of an individual save him in cases of extreme atrocity. Nevertheless, I feel a scruple on this point, and, if possible, will oblige you, most worthy Prospero. Give yourself, therefore, no uneasiness ; but rest assured that, in token of our great esteem for you, it is our will and desire to spare the life of Bernardino Cenci. Now, go in peace, and leave us to draw up and despatch the *placet*, that it may not arrive too late. Judge now, Signor Prospero, whether it be our fault, if you are not satisfied. Go in peace."

Farinaccio, in his acknowledgements of the pontifical favor, felt very much as did the patriarch Jacob, when he thanked his traitor sons for presenting to him the blood-stained garment of Joseph. Inclining his head, he rendered formal thanks to Pope Clement for his condescension, whilst the latter, under the semblance of affectionate concern, reiterated :

"We will despatch the *placet* instantly ; and we authorize you to announce at once that we have conceded it in consideration of our respect for your merits."

"*Ex ore leonis*," muttered Farinaccio, as he descended the staircase of the Quirinal. "Our forefathers of the olden time consecrated to gods the relics of the lamb rescued from the wolf's jaws."

So thought he then, and with more reason afterward, when he ascertained what kind of pardon the pope had granted Bernardino. Nevertheless, from hearing such frequent mention made of it ; and receiving the warmest

thanks, not only from others, but from Bernardino himself, for exerting his influence to procure it; and satisfied, moreover, of the policy of adopting the general credence; he at length believed in good earnest that he had rescued the boy from death. His losses and gains at the gaming table, his multifarious engagements and pleasures, gradually diminished and finally extinguished his sense of sorrow. The competence which he derived from his office of counselor, and the great credit he enjoyed at court, induced him subsequently to abandon the Cenci, in their suit to recover the entailed property which had been made over to the Apostolic Chamber. He excused himself by saying, that, "for his part, he had labored hard; that others now might try their talents and influence."

This and other reasons he urged with an air of truth and sincerity; but they were hypocritical. He was only true in verifying the fell presage of the sceptered priest, who, when asked by Farinaccio what would save him from his own conscience, replied, "*Your conscience itself.*"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE WIFE.

"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband."

PROVERBS.

BUT love sleeps not. Guido had found means to be informed of the fatal sentence the moment it was signed. Not apprehending it to be so imminent, he was surprised and confounded; however, he at once despatched orders to his newly acquired friends, the banditti, over whom his authority was daily increasing, to disguise themselves in various ways and assemble without delay in the Flavian amphitheater.

Indeed, two hours before dawn they had begun to gather in groups of two, three, or four; some habited as abbés, others as friars, while a few retained either their rustic garb or assumed the costume of gentlemen. However, on counting the congregated force, it was found not to exceed forty, too small a body for an enterprise of any moment. But Guido and his companions were not the men to be deterred from rushing into danger on account of paucity of numbers; he, himself, would have confronted it alone and unassisted. Having heard the opinions of his followers, he directed them to take a vine leaf for their badge and wear it in their hats or hoods, to provide themselves with weapons, which they should conceal on their person, and to mingle with the procession as it approached the scaffold. After putting to rout the Brothers of Mercy, the police and soldiers, they were to seize Beatrice, and

bring her to him at a designated spot, from whence, mounted on a fleet steed, he would speedily convey her beyond the walls : as for themselves, they were to take advantage of the disorder and consternation, and, disbanding, endeavor to reach Tivoli, where he would be awaiting their arrival. The banditti, disposed as they were by nature and habit for such perilous achievements, cordially concurred in the plot ; besides, they sympathized in the affection which every Roman citizen felt for Beatrice, and hoped, by rescuing her from the grasp of unjust power, to acquire a wide spread and honorable renown : nor were they insensible to the splendid guerdon which Guido, with the liberality of a Cæsar, had promised them in case of success.

It is a singular fact, but authenticated by the records of the time, that a few hours afterward, in the same city of Rome, others were concerting a similar enterprise. It was believed that these men were covertly urged on by Maffeo Barberini, through the medium of his confidential friends ; this may not be true, but certain it is he acted very zealously in the matter. The sad fate of Beatrice and her far famed beauty had touched him deeply. The diligence which he displayed in procuring her portrait, of which I will soon speak, and the honors he bestowed on her remains, are sufficient evidence of the interest he felt in her during life, and of his sorrow at her death.

Had Guido combined his forces with those of Maffeo, they would, perhaps, have accomplished their design ; but, believing he had already trespassed too much on his friend, Guido, with ill timed discretion, shrunk from engaging him in fresh enterprises, difficult of execution and fraught with danger.

This second conspiracy to rescue Beatrice was composed of artists, who, though wont to depict physical graces and

charms, are nevertheless, so strong is that tie of relationship which unites all that is good and beautiful, easily enamored of moral and intellectual beauty.

This band of youths was headed by several friends of the most conspicuous Roman families, secretly promoted to their charge by their noble patrons, who, it would seem, resented as a grievous insult this wholesale butchery of the Cenci. From the chronicles of the day we learn that the individual, more than all others inflamed by exasperation and rage, was Ubaldino Ubaldini, a young Florentine artist of great promise, who, but for his premature death, would have risen into high renown : he it was who designed the head of Beatrice, such as desperate love impressed it on his heart at the moment she was being led to execution. Guido Reni had not yet left Bologna, his native town, on his way to Rome : he arrived at the latter place towards the close of the year 1599, or the beginning of the following year, as is clearly manifest in his biography printed in the *Felsina pittrice*. Revered tradition informs us that Guido Reni painted the portrait of Beatrice on the eve of her death : but this is erroneous ; for if true, it would redound largely to the discredit both of the maid and the painter ; to that of Beatrice, because it would expose her to the imputation of vanity in that solemn moment, when her soul should have been, as it really was, absorbed in divine meditation and full of the holiest affections ; to that of Reni, because a painter's hand depicting, without a tremor, a lovely, unfortunate girl on the point of being dragged to unmerited death, argues a stolid or depraved heart. The portrait of Beatrice, designed by Ubaldini and finished by Guido Reni, is now preserved in the Barberini palace at Rome.

It was the design of these artist-conspirators to rush in amidst the procession, rescue Beatrice with the other

condemned, place them in a carriage drawn by swift and powerful horses, and convey them to the seaside. In point of numbers they surpassed Guido's company, but the latter overmatched them in valor and in that desperate energy and hardihood which results from frequent mingling in sanguinary conflicts. A white tassel in the cap was their destined badge. The door of the carriage, in readiness for the occasion, was to be held by Ubaldini, the reins by a certain French artist, who boasted that he could guide the chariot of the sun without risk of drowning in the Po.

"By heaven!" cried Ubaldini, striking the table with his clenched hand, "she must not die . . . she shall not die . . . it would be better . . ."

And as he hesitated to conclude the sentence, one of his companions urged him on, saying:

"It would be better to do what?"

"To destroy the Apollo or the Laocoon."

"And I would add, the cupola of St. Peter's;" rejoined a third.

"The more so, as these things can be reproduced;" said the Frenchman, who came forward to take the part of Automedonte; "it is far better they should perish than an innocent girl."

"Oh, priests! priests!" exclaimed a young artist, "you would assassinate our very models; and who would then be left us? Perhaps yourselves."

"What has this to do with the subject?"

"A great deal; for it is rumored they doom her to death with a view of getting her gold."

"Silence! let us bear in mind that it is not the beauty of a woman we admire, but the pure celestial beauty of an angel: it therefore becomes us to keep our hearts prepared by serious and devout meditation, that

her heavenly beauty may descend upon us like the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and quicken us with the power of acting magnanimously and achieving great results."

This grave discourse, uttered by the youthful Ubaldini, instantly arrested the ill timed sallies of his companions, who henceforth became as serious as the Fathers at the Council of Trent.

The earliest rays of the sun that streamed over the Roman hills lighted up in the prison of Torre di Nona a most heart-rending spectacle. Giacomo and Bernardino flew to embrace each other : in their efforts to mingle their tears and kisses, they got within each other's fetters, and thus were seen encircling each other with their arms and chains.

"Come, my dear boy, embrace me it seems as if I were clasping my children. Happy are you, Bernardino, that you have no children ! You know not half the sorrow of death."

"Have I not nephews ?"

"Alas ! my children . . . orphans a parricide's children, persecuted by a malignant man who can do as he pleases, and among other things covets their property. Where are my friends ? They have become my enemies. They would snatch the bread from the famished mouths of my offspring ; who is their protector ? Their mother, wearied and worn out, she even grieves that her bosom has become a nest of vipers . . . Ah ! no, no, Louisa, my Louisa will never abandon my children."

"Poor little ones ! Will they deprive them of all, even of my property ? But I know nothing of these knaveries, and a few moments ago I assured my father-confessor that I would not believe them. He obstinately reiterated, 'You do not say so,' and I as persistently cried, 'I do,' until they took me away."

"How very innocent you are, brother; who knows better than I? . . . You at least have one consolation, and this is that from this life you will pass into joy everlasting. As for myself, I doubt whether this will be permitted me, for though I took no part in the murder of Francesco Cenci, nevertheless I am forced to accuse myself of having formerly plotted against his life, and acquiesced in his violent death."

"Yet we are accused of having killed him with our own hands. I kill my father, the very sight of whom made my blood run cold? . . . But, though a boy, I am well aware that, had we denied the deed, we should have died a thousand deaths by torture; by confessing it, therefore, we have to suffer death but once, and this I take to be no small point gained. Tell me, my brother, you who know the world, is justice always dealt out in this way?"

Giacomo replied with sighs: the boy, startled by a sound, continued:

"Listen, Giacomo, listen. What bell is this that tolls so mournfully overhead?"

Giacomo, pressing his brother close to his breast, asked, in utter bewilderment:

"How do you feel, Bernardino?"

"I? Well."

"And are you loth to die?"

"I believe I am; for I love the birds and butterflies, and the flowers and trees; and I love to see the Tiber; I love everything. Here I can feel the sun, so bright and warm; on the other side of the grave I hear it is dark and cold. Here I know where I am; whither I am going I know not for a certainty."

"Well; you must know that this bell peals for our death; it announces that we must die, we who would remain."

As if to confirm his inauspicious words, the confessors and Brothers of Mercy now made their appearance at the prison door.

"Courage, brothers, the hour is near;" said a lugubrious voice.

"God's will be done;" replied Giacomo; but Bernardino interposed with the question:

"Is this really the will of God, Giacomo?"

"Certainly, since nothing happens without the divine will; and you commit a grievous sin by doubting it;" rejoined a confessor.

"If this be so, father, I repent; and to be deemed worthy in paradise, I will believe that, though innocent, I am doomed to death by God's decree."

"Who amongst us all is guiltless? We are all guilty in the eyes of God."

"But we are not all doomed to die at the age of twelve."

"God chastens those whom he loves; and you, my son, should thank him with all your heart for having chosen you out of a thousand to experience his infinite goodness and bounty."

"Father," replied the lad, ingenuously, "if you would but put yourself in my place . . ."

The friar, clasping his hands and raising his eyes towards heaven, interrupted him:

"With all my heart, my son, if I could do so, but I cannot."

Master Alexander, now presenting his bronze face, put a stop to the conversation. Strange as it may seem, his features wore an expression of extreme sorrow; yet a sorrow somewhat fiercely manifested towards those whom fortune placed in his hands. He dressed the prisoners in the black mantles furnished by the Brothers of Mercy,

and it so happened that the one thrown over the shoulders of Giacomo had belonged to Francesco Cenci, who while living was a member of the same pious fraternity.

All now moved at a slow pace from the prison. Giacomo paused on the threshold of the room he was leaving for ever, and which had so long been a witness of his terrible anguish, and spoke as follows :

"May a thousand curses fall on that man's head, who condemns his fellow man to waste away in this dungeon tomb ; a few only on his who, at one blow, sends him to the grave !"

The bells continued their melancholy knell ; the drums rolled out their harsh, discordant music ; heaven and earth seemed with these sounds to announce to each other that the butchery was on the eve of consummation, and to stand aghast at the news. In the court were drawn up several squadrons of mounted men, and a body of police : in short, the whole mournful display of force was present with which mock justice has need of being environed.

Bernardino, like one bereft of thought, beheld all these preparations ; but his attention was more particularly attracted by two cars, wherein iron pincers were being heated in furnaces of burning charcoal ; and with that inquisitiveness natural to boys, he asked :

"Giacomo, for what use do they intend those pincers ?"

Giacomo made no reply, while the Brothers of Mercy, for the most part, wept under their hoods. The boy impatiently persisted in his demand :

"I will know ; tell me, Giacomo : do not think you can frighten me, for I know that I have to die."

"They are for us," replied Giacomo ; he could say no more.

"Oh ! I never suspected that such torture would be thought necessary in my case."

He saw also a nail, a hammer, and a red cloak laced with gold ; all which objects, as being accessories of the crime, were borne on one of the cars to be exposed to the public.

" Giacomo, is not that the very cloak worn by our father ? Surely that red mantle haunts us ! "

The comforters, to prevent the boy's attention from wandering off from religious meditation, encumbered him, as well as his brother, with the *tavolette*, a kind of wooden case in which the prisoner's head was introduced, thus compelling him to keep his eyes fixed on the crucifix and on certain devout prayers, fastened within, which were composed for the occasion by a learned and pious Capuchin. The boy began to scream, and loudly implored them to free his head, that he might see the blessed sky. At this instant, a swaying to and fro of the people at the entrance to the court was visible ; then a defiling of soldiers, in whose midst appeared a carriage moving slowly onwards. The voices of the multitude, like billows of a tempest-tossed sea, beat violently against the prison walls, as the cry resounded on all sides :

" Pardon ! Pardon ! "

A flash of life gleamed before Giacomo's eyes, and he raised his head, as does the poppy when the hurricane has passed. From the carriage descended the illustrious Signor Ventura, who, presenting himself before the condemned, drew a paper from his bosom, and said, as the chronicles of that day relate :

" Don Bernardino Cenci, our master grants you your life. Please, however, to accompany your relations, and pray God for their souls. "

The brother comforters then removed the *tavolette*, called also *pietà*, from Bernardino ; while the executioner, having examined the pope's *placet*, unlocked his handcuffs,

and no other apparel being at hand with which to conceal his garb of culprit, took the red mantle of Count Cenci and enveloped the boy in its folds. So destiny would have it that the surviving sons of this wicked man should approach the scaffold, one wearing the black cape in which he betrayed his God, and the other the red cloak with which he sought to betray Marzio. Like the shirt of Nessus, his cast-off garments proved fatal to his family, bearing as it were on their very skirts, the stain of blood and the dark hues of guilt.

Bernardino, beholding once more the unclouded sun, and feeling himself safe, clapped his hands and leaped and shouted for joy, as the instinct of life prevailed at that moment over every other passion; but his delight was almost immediately merged in sorrow, as he thought how many causes for grief still remained to him, and how cruel it was, in the presence of his doomed brother, thus to evince his exultation: he, therefore, crouched at Giacomo's feet and supplicated his pardon.

In Giacomo, the shadow of death was already obscuring the vital spark; his eyes were glassy and bewildered; yet his attenuated throat continued to gurgle forth these words:

"Rejoice, my brother; if you could but see my heart, you would learn that my joy is greater than yours. The Lord begins to mitigate his anger against me, for he has deigned to send my children another father. Take them, therefore, under your protection; to you, I recommend my offspring with the same faith and affection I feel in recommending my soul to my Creator."

"Giacomo," replied Bernardino, embracing his brother's knees, "I swear to you that I will make a vow of chastity, that other affections may not divert me from being a father to the children you consign to my charge."

“And now, blessed be God ! we can go.”

The procession, having issued from the court yard, took its way towards Santa Maria in Posterula, where they were then repairing the College of Celestines, afterwards called the Clementine, from the reigning pontiff. Arrived half way up the Via dell' Orso, the executioner threw back Giacomo's mantle and exposed him naked to the waist ; he then seized the red hot pincers and tore off a piece of his flesh.

Bernardino jumped furiously to his feet, and strove to snatch away the burning pincers ; but the executioner thrust him back : comprehending the futility of such attempts, he threw himself on his knees, and with joined hands, besought the executioner :

“Oh ! for mercy's sake, do not touch him ! It is enough—too much for him . . . let me also come in for my share.”

And as Master Alexander, unheeding these entreaties, was about to renew the torture, Bernardino cried out :

“For pity's sake, good brothers, let me have the *tavollette* again . . . that I may not see . . . nor hear . . . oh ! oh ! my heart is breaking.”

And the boy fainted away.

Don Giacomo, to keep himself from groaning aloud, bit his lips so closely, that his mouth filled with blood : perspiration poured down his forehead like rain ; his hair stood erect like quills upon the porcupine ; his frame shuddered through every limb : sometimes he sobbed, but never groaned. The unfortunate wretch, lacerated in this inhuman manner, proceeded through the Nicosia and Palomba squares, as far as the Church of Santo Apolinare ; thence the procession wound off to the Piazza Navona, and thence by San Pantaleo, Via dei Polacchi, and Piazza delle Palottole, to the Campo di Fiore, the

huckster market, where, by *particular privilege*, those condemned by the tribunals of the Holy See, were executed.

In this manner did the potentates of the earth, especially the pontiffs, seek to invest infamy with the semblance of honor, nor have they yet wholly abandoned the practice. Let the world shudder, hiss, or laugh, as it thinks fit; what matters it to them? Do they not still continue to ennoble spies, and deal out indulgences and distinctions to traitors?

The proceasion now traverses a region that burns beneath the tread; it is the *Piazza dei Cenci*. Giacomo, overpowered by grief, either cared not or knew not whither they were dragging him. Arrived beneath the arch, where commences the broad flight of steps, which lead to the Church of Saint Thomas of the Cenci, he heard, overhead, certain agonizing cries, which even overcame the consciousness of intense physical pain. He raised his eyes, and recognized the arms of his wife and children outstretched from the terrace that overlooked the Arch of the Cenci.

The idea of being seen by his family in such an abject and miserable condition made the blood curdle in Giacomo's veins, and so touched his heart, that he staggered, and was about to fall. But affection overmastering shame, he exclaimed, with a voice full of tenderness,

"My children! oh! my children give me my children. . . ."

The officers charged with the execution of the sentence were bent on proceeding; but the excited people cried out with one voice,

"Give him his children!"

And as the officers hesitated to obey, a part of the impetuous multitude burst through the proceasion, and with great noise came up to the very carriage of the condemna-

ed. Finding their resistance of no avail, the officers at last consented, exclaiming, "That nothing was dearer to their hearts than to gratify the universal wish." They, therefore, made Giacomo descend, flung the cloak over his shoulders to hide his wounds, and conveyed him up the steps as far as the palace yard. Suffering intense agony from the contact of the garment with his lacerated flesh, Giacomo, nevertheless, suppressed his groans in mercy to his wife and children.

Louisa, her hair all disheveled, quickly descended the staircase, holding one child to her bosom, and another by the hand. She was followed by Angiolina, conducting the other children; and in an instant they all joined the doomed husband and father in the square. Louisa flung one child towards Giacomo's neck, where it clung with desperate tenacity. She would then have prostrated herself and embraced his knees; but at Giacomo's voice she became unnerved, and fell senseless at his feet.

"My children," said he, "in less than half an hour hence one blow will have bereft you of a father, and your mother of a husband. I leave you a sad inheritance, and this thought torments me more than my tortures. When they shall have buried me in the Church of Saint Thomas, bear in mind that, even though you be driven from your home, no one can close against you the doors of the church erected by your ancestors. Go there at night; see that no one beholds you, and pray for the soul of your poor father. Louisa, I do not tell you to take care of your children and mine. I know . . . I am conscious that before a blow can strike them, it must first pass through your heart. My Louisa, where art thou?"

Hearing no reply, he bent down to place the child on the ground, and perceiving Louisa senseless at his feet, he raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed :

"I thank thee, O Lord ! that, having afforded me the consolation of seeing her once more before death, thou hast spared her the pangs of this final separation."

Then, prostrating himself on the ground, he kissed her face, and bathed it with his tears. He next took the children one by one, as they pressed around him, seeking with their infantile hands to detain him, and giving vent to piteous and heart rending cries.

"Adieu ! . . . my children," said the wretched father between his sobs, "adieu ! we shall see each other in Paradise. . . . Bernardino, they are now your children . . . bear that in mind."

And Bernardino began eagerly to embrace and kiss those dear little ones, and quiet them as well as he might, promising that he would shortly return home.

"But as for papa, say, will you bring him back to us ?"

"I shall not . . . but others undoubtedly will. . . "

"Adieu ! . . ."

All wept together, and a loud voice of wailing was heard around ; an ungovernable sobbing, as if death had carried off from each one of the bystanders a son or a brother.

They resumed the Way of the Passion. Some there were among the spectators who felt oppressed by the emotions they had experienced ; while others moved on, eager for new and more stimulating sensations. Ah ! callous souls !

Angiolina, left alone with the desolate Louisa, was sorely troubled as to how she could convey her back to her apartments. Not one of the many servants, not one of the numerous retainers and friends of the Cenci family was there to aid her in her pious ministry. Men and brutes alike withdraw from the house that threatens ruin. She approached the street to wait for some passer by

At length she hailed the old Jew Giacobbe, who kept a huckster's shop not far beyond the Cenci palace; for I think I have already observed that this palace was in the neighborhood of the Ghetto. Angiolina shrank at first from the idea of enlisting the services of one who, according to the opinion of the age, was esteemed less than a dog; but urged by necessity, she reluctantly asked him to assist her in carrying the poor lady home. Giacobbe, who had not failed to notice the pride she vainly strove to conceal, bowed his head and replied:

"Willingly, lady. The Lord in his own way has visited this house, and all the afflicted should fraternize."

Giacobbe made his way through the children, who, thinking their mother was dead, stood weeping around her. He took Louisa in his arms, assuring the children at the same time that their mother was alive, laid her on a couch, placed pillows under her head, and then comforted Angiolina, thus addressed her:

"Born to suffer and to die, even we, whom you curse, have hearts within our bosoms. If you require more of me, command, I pray you; and let God's creatures, divided by injustice, be at least united by sorrow."

Angiolina took leave of him, venturing even to clasp his hand. After a long interval Louisa recovered. Casting her bewildered eyes around the bed, she beheld her children, as Niobe once regarded hers, pierced with the shafts of misfortune. Leaning on her elbow, she, in a feeble, languid voice, thus spoke to them:

"We shall never see him more! In a short time, my children, we shall have no roof to yield us shelter. We shall lose all at once, father, relations, friends, reputation, and home. Forget what you were, the better to remember what you are. When your father's friends shall feign not to recognize you, do not take it to heart. The serv-

ants have abandoned you, but pity them ; where bread is found, there also are they ; and you have bread no longer. Gentlemen's children will be ashamed of you, but depend on yourselves ; the offspring of the people will fly from you, win them back by affection ; the hands of all will be against you, raise yours against none. Do not curse your father, for he was unfortunate, not guilty ; and even were he guilty, it does not become children to judge their parents : but I assure you he was unfortunate and innocent. Pray, therefore, that if he cannot come to us, God may soon please to conduct us to him. We are alone ; let us redouble our bonds of affection, and we shall be unconscious of our desolation."

When she had arrived thus far in her sorrowful discourse, a voice from behind was heard responding to it in accents of grief. Louisa, turning her eyes, saw that it was Angiolina, who, on her knees at a respectful distance, had joined in hers the hands of her child, and, with them raised towards heaven, was weeping and praying. In this manner the gentle creature wished to signify to Louisa that all hearts had not abandoned her, and that one, at least, would for ever remain to participate in the woes of her family, and mingle her tears with hers.

Louisa understood the tender reproof, and calling Angiolina to her side, passed her arm affectionately around her waist and kissed her :

"Sister, I ask your pardon." Then, raising her eyes towards heaven, she added, "Lord, have pity on two desolate widows : without thy aid we can do nothing."

And bowing her head, she remained some time silent, and then continued :

"My children, you will not now be left alone ; you have two friends who will love you well. God hath taken from you a father, but has sent you a second mo-

ther. The last thing to be forfeited is hope ; and this, too, is lost in the end ; but a friend tried in misfortune is never lost."

The women continued weeping ; but from that time forward their tears trickled less bitterly. When God beholds from the height of heaven the friend who, in the hour of sorrow, clings closer to another, he rejoices to have created man, and then only remembers to have created him after his own likeness.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LAST HOUR.

"That neck so beautiful is given to the steel."

MOSCHINI.

THE procession, which conducted the brothers Cenci to the scaffold, after having traversed several streets, arrived at length in the Via Giulia, where it halted before the Prison of Corte Savella.

Beatrice and Lucretia were absorbed in silent meditation; Father Angelico engaged in prayer; but his ear, ever on the alert, caught the echo of a noise that gradually approached nearer and nearer. He raised his eyes, and through the hole of the dungeon door beheld a figure, with flashing eyes, beckoning to him. He well understood the sign. Oh, God! Though he had long frittered away his existence in the ever bitter occupation of comforting wretches reduced to the extremity of misfortune, he had not the heart to apprise Beatrice that her hour was come. Whilst thus neglectful of his bounden duty, the girl, by the prayers she addressed to God, gave him courage to act.

"And if," said she, "this irresistible desire which urges me away from life be sinful, do thou, oh, Lord! forgive it. I am like an exile, who, standing on the sea shore, outstrips with expectancy the vessel that is to waft him back to his native land. Oh, heaven, thou indeed, art the true, the hospitable home of the afflicted."

"Daughter, if you feel thus undaunted, the Lord is already come . . . he is come to take you. Let us be going."

And rising to his feet, he extended his bony hand, took that of Beatrice, so snowy white ; while she in turn quickly rose, with the exclamation :

“ Suffering here below is martyrdom ; in paradise it is glory Let us go let us go ”

Whether through curiosity or pity, the people now thronged hither in the greatest numbers, scarcely leaving a passage to the ill starred retinue. Men and children were perched like birds on the cornices and curves of the windows, or crouched like caryatides against the walls, on the projections over the doors, and even on the iron lamp-holders. These people belonged to the common mass, who could shed tears without feeling true pity. All apparently bewailed a deed that not one among them would have raised an arm to prevent : on the contrary, they rather preferred it should be as it was ; for such an occasion is a festival to the rabble, the more acceptable as it costs nothing, and the more esteemed because of the terrible sensations it excites.

And now there appeared Donna Lucretia, wearing a black veil, which enveloped her head and fell down to her waist. She also wore a black calico cape, with large open sleeves, and an inner garment of fine linen, with minute plaits, and tight at the waist ; such being the fashion of the day. Her waist was not girdled with a white ribbon, then in use among the Roman widows ; but with a cord which confined her arms, yet not so tightly as to prevent her from holding with her right hand a crucifix before her eyes, nor from wiping away with her left the big drops of sweat that poured down her brow. Her slippers were of black velvet, with tassels of the same color.

Long and deep sorrow had been unable to wither the celestial beauty of Beatrice. Like a flame about to expire, she seemed to shine with greater splendor in her last mo-

ments. Suffering had besprinkled her with the dew distilled in heaven from the palms of pious martyrs. She lingered a moment on the earth, but only as an angel already unfolding her wings to fly into the bosom of God. Her costume was somewhat different from that of her stepmother: she wore a white veil, and over her shoulders a kerchief of silver tissue; her gown was of violet taffeta; her high shoes of white velvet, the tassels, binding and heels being of a crimson color.

"Here she comes! Here she comes!"

This exclamation sped with the rapidity of lightning, and, as if all hearts and eyes were for her alone, all anxiously strained their gaze to behold her.

When she issued from the prison door, she was confronted by the crucifix of the Brothers of Mercy, half enveloped in a long and drooping black veil, which, fluttering in the September wind, seemed like a sail filled to the breeze.

She bowed before the holy emblem, and, with her mother, prostrated herself upon the ground.

"Since thou comest to me," said Beatrice, "with open arms, deign, oh, Redeemer! to receive me with the same affection I feel for thee."

Giacomo and Bernardino, beholding from the car the beautiful innocent, and feeling remorse for having obliged her to confess herself guilty with the view of saving the others from death, and believing, moreover, that they had been the cause of her condemnation, urged by one common impulse, threw themselves from the car, before the officers could prevent them, and falling prostrate at her feet, implored her forgiveness:

"Pardon us, sister! through our fault, you are about to die innocent."

Beatrice, observing the cruel manner in which her

brother's flesh was torn, shuddered convulsively, and leaned for support on the Capuchin's arm ; but soon regaining her courage, she gently replied :

" For what have I to forgive my brothers ? It was neither your confession nor mine, but our property, that doomed us to death. For what then have I to forgive you ? Perhaps, for enabling me to quit, prematurely, this forest, so thickly peopled with wild beasts, under human form ? But I am impatient to leave it. Perhaps, for sending me where there are neither oppressors nor oppressed ? But were I sent thither this moment, it would not be soon enough. Courage, Giacomo ! They can now inflict upon you a grievous pain, but it will be brief. Why do we linger here ? Let us haste away, to shelter ourselves in the bosom of the Consoler who awaits us let us away to peace to eternal peace."

Strengthened with the consolation imparted by their heroic sister, the brothers remounted the car, and underwent imperturbably what remained to them to suffer.

Beatrice walked with a quick, firm step, like one interested in keeping an appointment : in passing the many churches on the way, she prostrated herself, and prayed with such fervor and devotion, that those who heard her, inwardly besought God that he would permit them, in their last moments, to experience a faith and exultation equal to hers.

One of the hooded brethren, however, seemed to be deeply annoyed by the frequent protestations which Beatrice made of her innocence, and manifested his feeling in various ways. His office of comforter, entitling him to a place near Beatrice, he, at length, pushed his temerity so far as to whisper in her ear :

" Who prompted you to deceive yourself, by insisting so pertinaciously on your innocence ? You could not

escape human justice, and do you hope to succeed better with divine ?”

Beatrice keenly felt the insult; but now, elevated above the sphere of earthly influences, instead of showing resentment, she gently replied :

“ Because I speak to God, to whom nothing is a mystery, I speak the truth.”

“ But you confessed to the crime when not under torture.”

“ I was persuaded to do so, to save my relations : if this confession had been the cause of our death, I should repent of it, as a grievous sin ; but our death was determined on, previous to the process. We were not tried by the judges for justice’ sake, but that they might sentence us to death ; and could they have consigned us at once into the hands of the executioners, it would have been an economy of time and money.”

“ No ; you are guilty ; and I tell you that the gate of salvation is closed against you, if you do not humble yourself to the dust, and *coram populo*, confirm your confession.”

“ Are these the arguments with which you would console me ? My salvation depends not on you, nor any other earthly being. Be silent.”

“ I will not be silent. You are guilty ; you must accuse yourself of parricide.”

At this moment, a flower vase, thrown from above, either purposely or by accident, struck the hooded brother on the shoulder : the blow broke the bone and sent him reeling to the ground, with a sharp cry of pain. The brothers hastened to raise him up, and removing his hood, recognized him to be Giovanni Aldobrandini, the pope’s nephew. His relatives had sent him as a *comforter*.

From the Via Paolina the procession entered on the

Piazza del Castello Sant' Angiolo, called likewise the Mole of Adrian. From the midst of the square, or piazza, rose the scaffold; on the platform of which, was a bench where lay a block, and on the block an ax. The rays of the setting sun glittered on the polished steel and made it shine like fire. The people, densely crowded together, swayed like a field of corn shaken by the blast.

The procession had nearly reached the Chapel of San Celso, where the blessed sacrament was exposed—the last stage of the condemned, who, after having said their prayers at this spot, must hold themselves in readiness to be conducted separately to the place of execution. From on high could be seen the people repelling and repulsed, flying in different directions, and spreading commotion far and wide.

A mere handful of men, recognizable by the vine leaf in their hats, advanced, firm and silent, dealing blows with daggers to the right and left. Language can give but an inadequate idea of the consternation diffused around, of the wild tumult and fierce piercing cries that resounded through the air. The cavalry endeavored to spur forward their horses, but these recoiled in disorder; the police looked to their own safety; Brothers of Mercy, priests, torches, banners, the crucifix, every thing, in short, was thrown into utter confusion.

Master Alexander, erect on the car, kept Giacomo and Bernardino constantly in his clutches, like a falcon that grasps two sparrows in its talons. Much to be admired were the attitudes and manifestations of feeling among the men and women on the terraces, the roofs and the balconies of houses along the streets; piteous were the wailings of the dishearted people below in the square. Persons, from fear, or the heat of the sun, became deranged. In addition to all this, some temporary plat-

forms, erected in the square, and crowded with people eager to witness the execution, fell to the ground with a terrible crash, bruising and lacerating many.

Guido, mounted on his fiery steed, beheld all this, and awaited, in eager anxiety, for the result. His companions, now proceeding onwards, approach Beatrice : lo ! the last obstacle is well nigh removed !—they are seizing her—they have lifted her from the car—they bear her away—she is safe ! The people burst forth into loud and joyous acclamations ; they second the rescuers, and, but for their tumult and awkwardness, would have afforded effectual support.

Incapable of mastering himself, Guido stretched out his arm as if he would shorten the space that separated him from Beatrice. As chance would have it, in his impulsive movements, he drew in the right foot and goaded, unconsciously, the horse with his spur, which, together with the noise and tumult around, so frightened the animal that, seizing the bit in his foaming mouth, he dashed off with the speed of lightning, rushing headlong through the crowds of people, and bearing his despairing rider far away from the scene.

Despite this disaster, Guido's companions would have conducted Beatrice away in safety, and, placing her in the first carriage that presented itself, have secured her retreat ; but it seemed to be the sad destiny of Beatrice to find the affection of men more prejudicial to her than their hatred.

The multitude now began to sweep back impetuously, hard pressed as they were by a squadron of horse, which came furiously upon them, while the riders dealt terrible blows on every side with their swords.

Amid this contest, Beatrice seemed like a frail vessel in a stormy sea. Now she appeared above the swaying

of the rabble, now disappeared; at one moment she advanced, at another retrograded, a step towards, a step from the scaffold.

The youthful Ubaldini, who beheld all this from the step of the carriage prepared to receive Beatrice, was aware that another party was struggling to save her, and clearly saw that by not acting conjointly, the movements of each only served to thwart the enterprise. Appalled by the imminent danger, he sprang forward to order his men to desist from advancing further, and even to retreat, if they would save Beatrice. But the well meaning youth, in consequence of the wild disorder and cries, failed to make them understand, and these, fancying he had deserted his post, soon grew disheartened, and gave up in despair.

In the meantime, the disordered cavalry, availing themselves of the cleared ground, rallied and formed into line, while the police took station in their rear. The captain of the squadron then commanded a charge, which had easy and immediate success. Ubaldino, becoming desperate, endeavored, single handed, to oppose the advancing horsemen, and thrust his sword to the hilt in the breast of the first foe he encountered; but soon, overcome by numbers, with his skull split open, and his shoulder laid bare to the bone, fell, almost lifeless, to the ground. The infantry, now forming a square, presented a serried mass impossible to resist. Thus pressed from behind and attacked in front, Guido's companions could only make their escape by a flank movement, which they effected with impetuous fury, only to see that the enterprise had failed.

As a vessel, after long tossing upon the waves, is at length dashed by the increasing tempest against the rocks, so Beatrice, amidst the tumult and confusion caused by

the attempt of her friends to save her, was forced up in the struggle to the very base of the scaffold.

Imagine, if you can, her feelings. Did her bosom beat with one pulsation of hope? Did she again behold the radiant visions of life? Did Love smile upon her? Love did smile upon her, yet she longed no longer for life. She had journeyed too far towards the tomb to wish to return and begin life anew. She was even possessed with an earnest desire to repose her head on the bosom of God: nevertheless, Love smiled upon her, for man—and especially woman—is happy, even on the brink of the grave, in the idea of being loved. They err then who sculpture Love in tears over the tomb of the enamored maiden; he descends into it with her, and there abides; for the very ashes of the dead thrill and tremble with love, when the loved one addresses to the dear departed a memory or a sigh. Beatrice observes Guido, and bids him, in the distance, a last farewell: notwithstanding the intervening space, they kiss each other with their their eyes.

They kiss each other! At the foot of the scaffold, or after extreme unction, even a saint may suffer herself to be kissed by the man who loves her. The last kiss but one is not registered as a crime in heaven, provided the last be from the lips of death. Even Michael Angelo kissed Vittoria Colonna while she was dying. These affections are beyond the comprehension of the vulgar, but not so to minds accustomed to bask in the rays of divinity; to souls who received at their birth the genius of Love. And Beatrice, as though he were present, as though his fingers played with the sunny tangles of her hair, thus sweetly addressed her lover:

“Live happy, my love, my Guido. God will not keep thee long on earth to sigh in sorrow. Weep, Guido; repent. Every tear thou sheddest will be but a feather

in the wing that shall waft thee to bliss. We can only fly to heaven on the wings of sorrow. And there we will meet to part no more."

Father Angelico, noticing this, became alarmed; and, cursing the malignant spirit that inspired her with earthly thoughts, called her aloud by name, and conjured her to keep her mind steadfastly fixed upon God.

"Beatrice, free your soul from every passion that is not born of heaven. Do not recross the threshold of eternity to look back upon life."

And Beatrice smilingly rejoined:

"Father, I am a poor sinner, and you a holy doctor of divinity; nevertheless, I assure you I do not sin in thinking of my love. I aspire to spiritual nuptials; I yearn for the marriage of souls: within the Creator's arms we shall embrace each other. Love is God and God is Love."

The good Capuchin was not persuaded by this strain of theology; but, knowing that neither time nor place admitted of disputation, he limited himself to a brief exhortation:

"Daughter . . . here is your spouse Jesus: fix your mind on this . . . kiss it with the fervor of your soul."

"Oh yes, with all my soul; for he showed unbounded love for us."

The condemned had now assembled within the chapel. After the time allotted for adoring the Blessed Sacrament had expired, the Brothers of Mercy proceeded to bring in Bernardino, that the unfortunates might thus have the benefit of the favors so lavishly dispensed by the pontiff. The poor boy appeared more dead than alive. When arrived at the foot of the ladder leading to the scaffold, they ordered him to ascend.

"Oh, my God! my God!" he cried, in utter anguish,

"how may deaths must I die? Twice you have promised me my life, and twice betrayed me. Ah me! what torture is this?"

Words were of no avail to persuade him that his doom was not sealed; and, on arriving at the platform, his hair stood erect when he beheld the ax lying on the block.

He fainted away.

The Brothers of Mercy hastened to revive him with water; and, when he had recovered his senses, seated him beside the block: not to die, but only to witness the execution of his relatives.

The brothers proceeded with the usual ceremonies to conduct Lucretia Petroni to the scaffold. This truly pious lady, seeing Beatrice absorbed in meditation, quietly arose and had nearly reached the door before her step-daughter was aware of her departure. Beatrice, raising her eyes, exclaimed:

"Ah! my mother, why have you abandoned me?"

Lucretia, hemmed in by the brothers, who concealed the girl from her sight, heard the piteous appeal, while crossing the threshold of the chapel, and replied:

"I do not abandon you; I only go before to show you the way."

Lucretia, being large of figure, ascended the ladder with difficulty, the more so as she had left, according to orders, her slippers at the bottom; at length, she stood on the fatal platform. The executioner then withdrew the veil from her head, and the linen covering from her shoulders. Lucretia blushed at finding herself thus exposed to the waist, in presence of the people. Fixing her eyes on the ax, and trembling and weeping profusely, she exclaimed:

"Oh God! have mercy on my soul, which is now to appear before thy judgement seat;" and, turning to the

spectators, she cried: "and you, brothers, pray to God for me."

She then asked the executioner what she was to do; and was told that she must place herself across the bench, and then fall prostrate on her face. Lucretia shrank back for a moment; but, at last, resolved to meet her fate firmly.

Bernardino concealed his eyes under the red mantle. A harsh blow made the scaffold shake, and the boy staggered. Lucretia's head was dissevered. The executioner grasped it with one hand by the hair, and with the other applied a sponge to the bleeding neck. Then holding up the head and exposing it to the people, he cried out:

"This is the head of Donna Lucretia Petroni Cenci."

The body remained immovable; not so the head, which several times opened and closed its eyes. Enveloping the latter in the black veil, Alexander lowered, by means of a rope, both head and body to the foot of the scaffold. The Brothers of Mercy reunited the severed parts in a coffin, which they carried to San Celso, that the execution might be fully consummated.

The work on the platform is continued; the executioner and his assistants cleanse the blood from the block; all the apparatus is arranged; the ax is made ready, and the arm prepared to strike.

The hooded brothers proceeded to conduct Beatrice. On beholding them, she asked:

"Has my mother died as she ought?"

"She has; and now she is awaiting you in heaven."

"Amen."

When she saw the crucifix of the fraternity, she sweetly uttered these words, devoutly transmitted to posterity by those who heard them:

"My good Jesus, since thou didst shed thy most precious blood for the salvation of mankind, I may hope that one drop was shed for me. If thou, who wast innocence itself, wert so outrageously abused, and put to death with such tortures, why should I, who have so long offended thee, grieve to die? Open to me, through thy infinite bounty, the gates of heaven, or at least pilot me to some place of refuge."

An assistant of the executioner then approached the girl, to bind her hands behind her back; but, recoiling a step, she said,

"It is not necessary."

Being apprised that she should submit to this last act of humiliation, she joyfully replied:

"Well, then, bind my body to corruption; but be quick in letting loose my soul, that it may hasten to immortality."

Coming out into the open air, she found at the door seven maidens robed in white, who were waiting to accompany her. They had come of their own accord. Hearing that Beatrice had bequeathed all her dowry to the daughters of the Roman people, they had come voluntarily to offer her this farewell tribute of gratitude. She desired to take leave of them, but they would not listen to her, and insisted on following in her train. A crier then took a paper from his pocket, and read aloud as follows:

"By order of the most illustrious Monsignore Ferdinando Taverna, Governor of Rome. Three strokes of the rope, independently of further penalties, *ad libitum*, shall be applied to any person who, either by word or deed, may seek to interfere with the execution of the accursed family of the Cenci."

The girls, hearing the proclamation, stood firmer than before, and said:

"We have not come to interfere, but to console. If this be crime, let them punish us."

"Alas! Do not deprive me or them of this melancholy solace," said Beatrice, interposing; and the Brothers of Mercy took on themselves the responsibility of gratifying their wishes.

All now moved on together. Beatrice recited in a sonorous voice the litany of the Blessed Virgin, and her companions with deep devotion responded, *ora pro nobis*.

She reached the base of the scaffold. Undaunted, but without vain vaunting, she turned to the maidens, kissed their cheeks, and thus addressed them:

"Sisters! may God render you that recompense for charitable services which I cannot. I leave you my dowry, but that is not worth a single expression of gratitude. If possible, I would leave you the years I should have lived to add to your own, and better still, the pleasures I should have enjoyed. May *your* love be a source of as much joy as mine was of endless and bitter sorrow. You will become mothers; love your children, and make them the crowning ornament of your lives. Let me have a place in your memories; and when people talk to you of my fate, tell them calmly that Beatrice died innocent . . . innocent, I swear by that omnipotent God before whom I must shortly appear; not indeed free from sin, for who is sinless before God? but of the crime for which I am condemned to death, I am innocent. Judges pronounced my doom; historians will treat of the crime as a debatable question; but, through your interposition, the record of my innocence shall dwell imperishably in the minds of the people. When injustice shall have closed its reign—which will be but brief—eternal pity will efface the stain of infamy that blots my name, and I shall

be the sigh of every kind, unfortunate maiden that walks the earth . . . Adieu!"

Jacob's dream is thus represented before the Roman people: an angel ascends the ladder to Paradise. To those most remote, her veiled head first appears, then her shoulders, her body, and now, fully disclosed, she stands on the platform.

"You have promised to touch me only with the steel," said she to the executioner; "at least, keep your promise, and inform me what I am to do."

He did so.

Bernardino still kept his face muffled in the red mantle. Cautiously and lightly she approached her brother, and fervently kissed his cheek. The boy was seized with a fearful tremor, and, somewhat removing the mantle, looked forth and saw the face of the dear innocent girl.

Again he fainted away.

Beatrice placed herself across the bench, and fell prostrate with her face on the block. The manner in which she performed this act, impressed the heart even of the executioner, who, thinking of his daughter, hesitated to inflict the fatal blow. Conscious of this delay, Beatrice exclaimed:

"Strike."

The ax descended. The multitude closed its eyes; and the air echoed with one prolonged, heart-rending wail.

The severed head did not move a muscle. The face still shone with the smile that lighted it up in dying, soothed as the girl was with visions of a better life. The body, on the contrary, shrank back, quivered with violent convulsions, and then was still.

The executioner extended his unsteady hand towards

the head, to expose it to the people; but Father Angelico and the comforters prevented him. One of the latter crowned it with a garland of roses, and having wrapped it in a white veil, cried out:

“This is the head of Beatrice Cenci, a Roman virgin.”

When Guido had exerted without effect every ordinary means to restrain his affrighted steed, he had recourse to a last and desperate expedient. Abandoning the reins, and stretching himself along the horse's neck, he thrust both hands into his smoking nostrils. His respiration being obstructed, the animal stood still; when Guido, stroking his neck soothingly, suddenly reined him around, and, traversing the same street, dashed furiously towards the scene of the execution.

He arrived there at the moment when the comforter, lifting on high the head of Beatrice, cried out, “This is the head of Beatrice Cenci, a Roman virgin.”

The Brothers of Mercy, having laid the remains of Beatrice in a coffin, bore it off to San Celso. Here, removing the garland from her head, they placed it round her neck. The incision which separated the head from the body was concealed by this garland of fresh and fragrant flowers, gathered in the morning. Some of them appeared redder than roses usually are; they were tinged with blood.

Oppressed with anguish, the brothers now enjoyed a brief repose.

The bench is again cleansed, the implements of death again prepared. The gaping mouth of the tomb never cries “enough.” The scaffold awaits the third victim.

Must the closing pages of my story be saddened with the narrative of an execution which surpasses the most harrowing visions of the imagination? I will describe it,

however, since horrid tortures of this kind are, sometimes, still inflicted in several parts of Europe, which claim to be civilized. Indeed, it is not many years since we heard of their being practised. True, those who suffered them were guilty ; but the simple death of the accused should suffice for the vindication of the law, and as a warning to mankind. In the name of heaven ! must we luxuriate even in the application of torture ? The ruthless cruelty that transcends the proper aim and object of punishment results only in enlisting in behalf of the criminal that pity which should be reserved alone for the unfortunate.

After a moment's rest, the Brothers of Mercy set off to conduct to punishment Giacomo, who, lacerated, dripping with blood, and pierced with wounds, suffered agonies difficult to imagine, much more so to describe. Oh ! he did, indeed, yearn for death as the thirsty hart "panteth after the water-brooks." He walked quickly, and, on arriving at the scaffold, was stripped of his cape and hat. Being thus left naked to the waist, his smarting wounds were exposed to view. The spectators were astonished that he could so long survive in such a condition, and still retain his senses and speech. He approached Bernardino, who, recovered from his swoon, was staring wildly around him, unmindful of all he saw. The boy was certainly a melancholy cause for tears, but Giacomo could weep no more—the fountain of his heart was dried up : he could now only shed his blood, and but little of that. Placing his hands on his brother's head, and turning his face towards Banchi, he exclaimed aloud :

"For the last time, I declare that my brother, Don Bernardino, is guiltless in every respect, and, if he confessed to the contrary, he did so under the influence of torture. Pray for me."

The executioner then fastened his legs to a ring set in the wooden platform, bandaged his eyes, seized the mace, and dealt him a furious blow on the left temple. Giacomo staggered like an ox struck in the slaughter-house. The executioner dealt six blows more on the breast and back of the prostrate man. The fractured bones crackled, while blood, strips of flesh, and pieces of ribs were scattered about; then bending down, and placing the mace under his neck, his foot on his forehead and his knee on his breast, the executioner opened his victim's body, plunged his arm therein up to the elbow, drew it out besmeared with blood, while he grasped in his hand the reeking entrails, which he exposed to the people, crying out:

"These are the entrails of Giacomo Cenci."

Then casting them into a corner, he quartered the body with a hatchet. A drop of the blood was spattered into Bernardino's face, and the boy fainted away the third time.

The people now imagined that he also was dead; but being reconducted immediately to the prison, he recovered, after much care and attention, his senses, though for several days he was in great danger; and it was not until he had received for several months the best medical attendance in Rome, that he regained his health.

The people of that time were in doubt—the present generation is more enlightened—whether the pope condemned Bernardino, or his relatives, to the greatest sufferings.

The *placet* of Clement declared that the sentence of death against Don Bernardino Cenci was reprieved; the penalty being commuted into that of working in the galleys for life, and this on condition that he would witness the execution of his kindred

Pope Clement, in his *soul*—if it be not a grievous sin against God to call by this name that infernal substance capable of such thought—reasoned thus :

“ Either Bernardino will succumb on beholding the slaughter, and in this case I shall reap at once the benefit of his death and the reputation of clemency ; or his nerves will resist the shock, and then civil death will produce the same results, in regard to the confiscation of his property, as capital punishment.”

Such was the mode of pardon adopted in Rome by the priests of those days !

Two hours before the Angelus, the butchery was completed.

Master Alexander proceeded to his apartment in Corte Savella, surrounded by horsemen and police, to save him from the fury of the people, who, according to their custom of attacking the instrument and not the moving cause, would have dashed out his brains. Whilst knocking at the door, through which he was wont to enter like a wolf into its lair, it was suddenly thrown open, and a bier thrust through it by invisible hands. Master Alexander found it necessary to spring quickly aside, lest his legs should become injured. It was no unusual thing ; indeed, it was a matter of ordinary occurrence, to see wretches consumed by grief, or mangled with tortures, dragged out in this manner ; nevertheless, the executioner's eyes were blinded as if a whirlwind of flame had passed before them. Following the bier, issued forth, with shoulders bent, those who had pushed it forward, and among them one who walked like an animal, with head downwards, as if he valued not, or despised, the faculty granted to man of standing erect, with his face towards heaven. It was *Otre*, the incorrigible drunkard. Distorting his face, and fixing his blood-shot eyes

on the executioner, he opened his enormous mouth and said :

“ Take ; God does not wait until Saturday ; he has paid you already.”

And, lifting up the pall, he uncovered the lifeless body of the poor Virginia. Then, raising himself erect and showing his teeth, he added :

“ The perquisites are worth the pay—take—take.”

So saying, he departed, staggering.

The young Ubaldino Ubaldini was transported with tender care into the house of his fair sister Renza, the wife of Signor Renza ; and here, with all possible dispatch and secrecy, they set about curing his wounds : devoted affection and medical zeal, however, were of no avail against the raging fevers, accompanied by delirium, with which he was immediately assailed. The physicians, taking his sister aside, told her, with tears in their eyes, that they despaired of her unfortunate brother ; intimating to her that, though he might get through the night, he could not survive a third part of the following day. In fact, about daybreak the malady increased, and Ubaldino, delirious as he was, asked for pencil and paper. To appease him, his request was granted, and, though his eyes were bandaged, he at once sketched, with vacillating hand, the portrait of Beatrice, which now excites our admiration by the purity of its outline, and the touching character of its expression. This was the design which, falling into the hands of Maffeo Barberini, served Guido Reni as a guide in the execution of that admirable picture which now adorns the walls of the Barberini Palace in Rome, and is known to all the world as “ The Cenci

If there be any who doubt the veracity of the fact, as I

have narrated it, I would give him to understand that this is a love-wrought miracle, neither strange nor unexampled. Thirty-one years after the death of Beatrice, Giovanni Gonnelli, a sculptor of Gambossi, in Tuscany, deprived of sight in his twentieth year, executed in plaster the portrait of the lady who, previous to his misfortune, had won his affections ; and with entire success as to resemblance. *Vide CICOQUARA. Storia della Scoltura. Tomo vi, cap. 4, pag. 194.*

Meanwhile, Monsignore Taverna, having discovered the asylum of Ubaldino, dispatched officers to arrest him. In vain were they told that the young man was *in extremis* ; they would enter the chamber. Ubaldino heard their coming and recognized them, thanks to that lucid interval which generally precedes death. Turning towards the officers, he said :

“ Tell the Governor Taverna you found me a dead man, but that, nevertheless, I would not exchange places with him.”

And falling back on his pillow, he died

It was the custom at this time in Rome for funerals to take place at three different hours of the day, according to the rank or condition of the deceased. Citizens were borne away at sunset ; nobles, ecclesiastics, and lawyers one hour after the Angelus ; the cardinals, princes, and barons of Rome one hour and a half thereafter.

The bodies of Beatrice and Lucretia, with the miserable relics of Giacomo, were exposed until three hours after the Angelus, at the pedestal of the colossal statue of Saint Paul, which stands at the entrance of the Bridge of Sant' Angiolo : from thence they were transported to the Consolato dei Fiorentini, and thence to the Misericordia. Three hours after nightfall the remains of Lucretia were

consigned to the care of her brother, who, in conformity with his sister's wish, buried them in the Church of San Gregorio.

The friends of the Cenci family procured permission to inter the relics of Giacomo in one of the tombs which the cruel Francesco had prepared for his children.

The seven maidens did not abandon Beatrice after her death: pity overcoming their horror, they rendered her corpse the last offices, washed it carefully, clothed it in splendid garments, sprinkled it with perfume, and decked it with flowers. On her head they placed a wreath of red roses, and another of white around her neck.

From all parts thronged crowds of white robed girls to render homage to their hapless sister; the orphans and all the orders of Saint Francis joined the afflicted throng. Fifty torches surrounded the bier, and so numerous were the lamps in the windows of the streets through which the funeral procession passed, so abundant the showers of roses poured upon the bier, that the people declared it surpassed the procession of Corpus Domini.

The funeral retinue, interchanging solemn hymns, arrived at the church of San Pietro in Montorio, where a catafalco was prepared, on which the body of Beatrice was laid. The chant then rose more plaintive than before; the corpse was sprinkled with holy water, and the last adieus spoken amid reiterated sighs and sobs. The crowd, however, did not hastily leave the church; the places of those who left were filled by others; and so the night passed on until the sixth hour.

At this hour of the night but few steps were heard on the pavement of the church. The warden announced that the church was about to be closed, and waiting until, as he thought, all had departed, he turned the ponderous door on its hinges and shut it with a violent noise.

This report, echoing from arch to arch, shook the ancient sepulchers through every angle of the house of God; by degrees the echo died away, and silence reigned.

One torch alone was left to light a small space around the catafalco. The lamps which, at wide distances, burned feebly before the altars of the saints, lent additional solemnity and awe to the obscurity of the place.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SEPULCHER.

"Where thy severed head reposes
Against thy virgin neck,
Was a garland laid of roses
By pious hands, to deck
The spot where fell the bloody knife
And cut thy thread of mortal life."

AUFASSI. "BEATRICE CENOL."

A FOOTSTEP breaks the silence; it is repeated. It is the step of a living man, moving towards the catafalco. The light of the torch reveals the features of Father Angelico, pale as the wax torch itself. What leads the poor friar here?

He sits down, near the candlestick, on the step of the catafalco: he clasps his knees with his arms, bows his head in humility, and, immovable in this attitude, weeps and prays.

And lo! from a remote corner of the church appears another shadow. It is that of a man. His steps are inaudible, so lightly does he touch the pavement; yet he moves at a rapid pace, but with a tottering gait. The various lamps, pendant from the vaults of the aisles, reveal in many directions several lengthy shadows, which might excite the suspicion that mischief had assembled there to commit some dark and desperate deed. But this is all illusion: the shadows proceed from one alone . . . one, if the despair that accompanies him be excepted. The breast of this individual, whoever he may be, heaves

and sinks with intense palpitation; but he so controls his emotion that his breathing is scarcely audible. His feet are naked; his eyes fixed and staring, terrible to behold.

He has already touched the skirt of the pall, and is about to raise it.

"I was expecting some one," spoke Father Angelico, standing up and placing his hands on the man's shoulder.

A motionless silence then ensued; long did they remain beside the catafalco of the beheaded maiden. Father Angelico, at length, broke the silence:

"Beatrice requires you to live. Her last . . . her very last thought was of you. She died joyously in the hope of seeing you in paradise, and commissioned me to acquaint you of this; she, moreover, commanded me to remind you of the grievous sins you have committed; sins, that, without a long course of penance, divine justice will not pardon. Would you, oh, wretched man, deprive yourself for ever of the means of being reunited to her in the embrace of the Lord? . . . Give me that weapon . . . that I may place it in her grave . . . and live! . . . Take this instead . . . it is her hair . . . which the ill fated girl bequeathed to you, that you might wear it next your heart . . . and this image of the Madonna, before which she breathed her last prayers, that you might also pray before it and obtain that forgiveness which Beatrice now asks for you at the throne of God . . . Now, go, my son, retire: do not disturb the repose of the dead. Beatrice is not here . . . Raise your eyes to heaven—there only will you see her again."

Guido let fall the dagger from his hand; and taking the lock of hair, placed it in his bosom: he took also the image, and bending his head, burst into tears.

Seizing the inconsolable lover by the shoulder, the friar, somewhat violently, forced him away and separated him from that bier for ever.

Slowly and reluctantly Guido withdrew from the catafalco, and at length reached the church door, which the monk opened. As they entered into the open air, the friar strove with gentle words to soothe his companion's excited feelings; but the latter, bursting forth suddenly into a frenzy, thrust back the holy man, and rushed out of the city and into the neighboring country, like one bereft of sense, and in despair.

Tradition informs us that, hindered from pouring out his own blood on the tomb of Beatrice, Guido resolved to propitiate her ghost by shedding the blood of others. Becoming the chief of a band of robbers, he made himself terrible, not only in the campagna of Rome, but in the city itself, where even armed guards and domestic walls proved no barrier to his genius and audacity.

Clement 8th, dying in 1605, was succeeded, after the very brief pontificate of Leo 11th, by Cardinal Borghese, under the name of Paul 5th, who thus got possession of the spoils of the Cenci family. This pontiff was informed by Guido Guerra that he would do well to dictate his will, for that, in one way or another, he should fall by his hand: and, as if this threat was not sufficient to raise the pontiff's fears to the height of terror, a certain astrologer was induced to prognosticate that his life would be of short duration. It was for this reason, that, dismissing both cook and steward, Paul remained pent up in the Vatican, nor dared to appear in public except in the midst of his armed servants. He feared even to receive in his hands a paper or memorial, apprehensive of its being poisoned.

Guido, becoming ashamed of his abject life, now aspired to more formidable revenge, and withdrew from Rome, directing his course to Flanders, where the war, sustained by the Flemings for their independence, was still being waged. But he arrived too late to take any active, or prominent part in public affairs. He then began to take a retrospective view of his past life, and to reflect that his every step had but borne him farther and farther from the path which Beatrice had pointed out and recommended to him. A letter he received from his aged mother, just before she was called away to a better world, had great effect in changing his course in life. She besought him to reconcile himself to God, and implore pardon for his sins. Listening to these admonitions, he did not, however, think proper to idle away his existence in some luxurious cloister, but retired to Mount St. Bernard in the Alps, where, in consequence of his unwearied care and disinterested bravery, many wretches, overthrown by avalanches, or precipitated into yawning chasms, were rescued from danger and death, and restored to health and to their families and friends. He thus acquired among the monks of that bleak convent in the Alps, and among all travelers, a high reputation for benevolence and integrity; and let us hope that Supreme Justice has permitted him to behold again in paradise her whom he had so deeply loved on earth.

Let us now turn to the place where the remains of Beatrice repose. From the church of San Pietro in Montorio has disappeared the Transfiguration of Raphael, and with it the monumental stone of the hapless maiden. The picture, placed in a worthier locality, still continues to receive the homage of posterity, whilst the devout,

sympathetic pilgrim seeks in vain for the sepulcher of Beatrice Cenci. The friars, in their anxiety to veil the shame of the papal court, have overturned the stone; the inscription has disappeared. Let the love-smitten pilgrim go to San Pietro in Montorio; let him pause before the high altar, beyond the balustrade. Let him there, at the foot of the altar steps, behold a slab of pentelic marble, which makes an angle with the lateral slabs. Beneath that stone repose in peace the relics of Beatrice Cenci, a virgin of sixteen years, condemned by Clement 8th, THE VICAR OF CHRIST, to an ignominious death, for a parricide of which she was innocent!

This will sufficiently indicate to the pilgrim the spot where the girl lies buried; but should it not enable him to recognize at once the stone, let him examine more closely and he will read the following epitaph, which, substituted by the hand of God for that formerly sculptured thereon, will never be canceled until the consummation of ages.

“The cruel avarice of the priesthood drank the blood and devoured the property of the betrayed girl who sleeps beneath!”

On the Tuesday following the execution, i. e. September 14th, 1599, the confraternity of San Marcello, enjoying the privilege of liberating a prisoner for the festival of the Holy Cross, procured the freedom of Bernardino Cenci, on condition that within the period of one year he should disburse twenty thousand scudi (or dollars) to the confraternity of the Most Holy Trinity at Ponte Sisto. How Bernardino, despoiled of his property, could pay these twenty thousand scudi, is, indeed, difficult to imagine; but the ever voracious Curia laid a snare to extort money

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